







ORIENTAL RUGS  
AND  
TEXTILES



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

A GUIDE  
TO AN EXHIBITION OF  
ORIENTAL RUGS  
AND  
TEXTILES

BY M. S. DIMAND, PH.D.

CURATOR OF NEAR EASTERN ART

NEW YORK  
MAY 13 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 15  
1935

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May, 1935

## LIST OF LENDERS

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GEORGE BLUMENTHAL

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## PREFACE

AMERICA has a great tradition in the appreciation of Oriental rugs. Names of such collectors as Charles T. Yerkes, C. F. Williams, Benjamin Altman, and James F. Ballard are familiar to students and lovers of rugs the world over, and the Altman and Ballard Collections and those of the Yerkes rugs now in the Metropolitan Museum are universally well known. However, there are in American collections, still unknown to the general public, other masterpieces of Oriental rug weaving from the looms of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century court factories in Persia, India, and Turkey. One superb example is Clarence H. Mackay's "coronation carpet," never shown in any exhibition heretofore.

It is to foster a more general realization of the fact that such rugs are true and great works of art that the Metropolitan Museum has imposed upon the generosity of its friends to assemble this loan exhibition. Private collectors have lent many rarely seen examples, and to be shown with them the Louvre and the museums of this country have sent some of the outstanding examples from their well-known collections.

To complete the picture of Oriental weaving a number of rare Persian, Turkish, and Indian textiles of the sixteenth to the eighteenth century are included in the exhibition. The magnificent Persian velvet throne cover of the period of Shah Abbas, lent by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., is one of the finest Oriental textiles in existence; the technical skill and craftsmanship of Muhammadan and Hindu weavers of India are represented by a rare velvet lent by George Blumenthal and by splendid brocades and embroideries from the collections of Mrs. William H. Moore and Miss Lucy T. Aldrich; and a few costumes from private collections and museums give the visitor an idea of the sumptuous fashions which prevailed in the Near East from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century.

The Museum is grateful to all those mentioned on page v, who, by so generously lending their treasures, have made this an outstanding exhibition.

H. E. WINLOCK, *Director.*



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ORIENTAL RUGS  
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## ORIENTAL RUGS AND TEXTILES

### *THE BEGINNINGS AND EARLY HISTORY OF RUG KNOTTING*

THE use of rugs as floor coverings or wall hangings goes back to remote antiquity in the Orient. Although no actual specimens have survived, we have indications from literary sources that rugs were known in ancient Assyria and Babylonia. For a long time the thirteenth-century Seljuk rugs from the mosque of Ala 'd-Din at Konia, now in the Evkaf Museum, Istanbul, were considered to be the earliest examples of Oriental rug knotting. Recently, however, Sir Aurel Stein's excavations in Central Asia<sup>1</sup> have brought to light important fragments of woolen pile rugs (found in dwellings, refuse heaps, and grave pits of Lou-Lan, a fortified station of the Chinese desert trade route) which date from the second century B.C. to the latter part of the third century A.D. These interesting rugs were either produced locally or, more probably, imported from eastern Iran, which had active trade relations with Central Asia. Another fragment of a pile rug, found by Le Coq at Kyzil, near Kutcha,<sup>2</sup> dates from the fifth or sixth century A.D. It is interesting to note that the technique, in which the knot encircles only one warp thread, is characteristic of Spanish rugs.

A fragment of a pile rug found in a Coptic grave at Antinoë, in Upper Egypt, and recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum opened an important new chapter in the history of Oriental rugs.<sup>3</sup> The field has an interesting geometrical pattern woven in imitation of a mosaic pavement, while the border is decorated with a vine scroll. The rich colors and the design recall Coptic tapestries, quantities of which were un-

1. Sir Aurel Stein, *Serindia*, vol. IV, pl. XXXVII, no. 0046, and *Innermost Asia*, vol. III, pls. XLIV, LXXXVII.

2. F. Sarre and Th. Falkenberg, "Ein frühes Knüpfteppich-Fragment aus Chinesisch-Turkistan," in *Berichte aus den preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, vol. XLII (1921), pp. 104-110.

3. M. S. Dimand, "An Early Cut-Pile Rug from Egypt," in *Metropolitan Museum Studies*, vol. IV (1933), part 2, pp. 151-162.

earthed in Egyptian graves of the Roman and Early Christian periods. This rug, which may be assigned to the beginning of the fifth century and was doubtless used as a floor covering, furnishes the first decisive proof that pile rugs were made in the Near East in the first millennium A.D. The technique is different from any hitherto analyzed, but is related to a certain extent to that used in the Sehna knot, which is familiar from Persian rugs. As Egypt was part of the Byzantine Empire, it is reasonable to suppose that it was not the only province in which pile rugs were manufactured. We know from contemporary writers that in the sixth century rugs covered the floors of Santa Sophia in Constantinople and the halls of the palace of Justinian. One authority states that large, soft, thick rugs with patterns resembling mosaics were used in the ninth century in the church of Basil I—doubtless with the intention of distinguishing pile rugs from those which were tapestry-woven or embroidered.<sup>4</sup>

Rug knotting was also practiced in Persia under the rule of the art-loving Sasanian kings (226–637). The court looms produced beautiful silk fabrics and rugs for the decoration of their palaces. Literary sources describe a famous garden rug in the palace known as the “Spring of Chosroes,” at Ctesiphon, near Baghdad, as made of gold threads and embellished with gems and pearls. This rug was probably embroidered or tapestry-woven, but we have conclusive evidence that the Persians of the Sasanian period also possessed true pile rugs.<sup>5</sup> When the Byzantine emperor Heraclius defeated the Sasanian king Khusrau II in 627, his favored residence Dastajird, north of Baghdad, was looted of all its treasures. Here, it is said, Heraclius found great quantities of silks, silken garments, soft rugs, and rugs embroidered with a needle. The reference is of great importance as it furnishes proof that the Persians were familiar with two types of rugs—soft pile rugs and smooth-faced rugs, the latter probably tapestry-woven.<sup>6</sup> No actual fragments have been found as yet in Persia or Mesopotamia, but it is hoped that future excavations will bring some to light.

Rug knotting was highly developed in the Muhammadan era, which

4. J. Ebersolt, *Les Arts somptuaires de Byzance*, pp. 12–13, 14.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

6. On Sasanian tapestries see R. Pfister, “Gobelins sassanides du Musée de Lyon,” in *Revue des arts asiatiques*, vol. VI (1929–30), pp. 1–23.

began in 622, the date of Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina. The Arab armies of the caliphs, invading Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, and North Africa, came in contact with civilizations superior to their own. Among the arts and crafts which the Arabs adopted from the conquered nations was the art of weaving. Fragments of rugs found in Egypt in excavations of Fustat (Old Cairo) indicate that rug knotting was practiced in Egypt in the Tulunid (868-904) and Fatimid (969-1171) periods; one now in the Arab Museum at Cairo<sup>7</sup> has a Kufic inscription which permits us to date the piece from the tenth or eleventh century.<sup>8</sup> Makrizi and other historians mention the fact that rugs were used in the palace of the Fatimid caliphs.

As stated above several rugs from the mosque of Ala 'd-Din at Konia, now in the Evkaf Museum in Istanbul," were regarded for a long time as the earliest specimens of Oriental rug weaving. Konia was the capital of the Turkish Seljuks in Asia Minor, and there many important mosques were erected during the thirteenth century. The rugs found at Konia and assigned by Martin and others to this period show a geometric design, with the addition of Kufic writing in the borders, and a color scheme limited to red, yellow, and blue. Professor Riefstahl has called our attention to a number of other rugs of the Konia type which are in a mosque at Beyshehir in Anatolia.<sup>10</sup> Some of them have an all-over pattern of arabesques and palmette devices treated in angular fashion and may be regarded as the prototype of the Anatolian rugs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There seems to be little doubt that these rugs from Konia and Beyshehir were made in the province of Anatolia, but it is less certain that they were actually produced at the court manufactories at Konia which Marco Polo so greatly admired. Professor Riefstahl has suggested that some of the elaborate patterns, combining arabesques, palmettes, and interlacings, seen in Seljuk stone

7. A. Baghat Bey and A. Gabriel, *Fouilles d'al Foustât* (Musée de l'art arabe du Caire), pl. XXXI.

8. Another fragment of the same period is in the Textile Museum at Washington, D. C.; see R. M. Riefstahl, "Ein Knüpfteppich spätantiker Tradition aus Ägypten im Metropolitan Museum zu New York," in *Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts*, vol. XLVIII (1933), fig. 11.

9. W. von Bode and E. Kühnel, *Antique Rugs from the Near East*, figs. 60-62.

10. R. M. Riefstahl, "Primitive Rugs of the 'Konya' Type in the Mosque of Beyshehir," in *The Art Bulletin* (College Art Assn.), vol. XIII (1931), no. 2, pp. 1-44.

reliefs from mosques at Sivas and Amasia reproduce the Seljuk court rugs, which Marco Polo thought were the finest and most beautiful in the world.

The geometric style is also evident in a small group of animal rugs represented in Italian paintings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>11</sup> There are only three specimens of these early rugs in existence. The piece in the Berlin Museum shows two square fields with octagons containing a stylized representation of a fight between a dragon and a phoenix.<sup>12</sup> The rug in the Historical Museum at Stockholm has two panels with confronting birds separated by a palmette tree.<sup>13</sup> The third piece, found at Fustat and now in this Museum,<sup>14</sup> may be regarded as the earliest of the group. Knotted in the Ghiordes technique, it is decorated with an octagon containing a stylized bird in green, light brown, and red. Rugs with single birds within compartments, recalling the design of tiled floors, are known from several fourteenth-century paintings,<sup>15</sup> for example the Marriage of the Virgin by Nicolo da Buonacorso in the National Gallery, London, and the fresco of the Annunciation in the church of Santissima Annunziata, Florence. A pattern similar to that in the Berlin rug is represented in the Marriage of the Foundlings by Domenico di Bartolo, a fresco painted between 1440 and 1444 in the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala at Siena. To judge from the frequency with which they appear in paintings, these animal rugs were imported in great quantities into Italy, through Genoa and Venice. They may be attributed to eastern Asia Minor or western Caucasus, the home of the later so-called dragon carpets, sometimes known as "Armenian."<sup>16</sup>

Our knowledge of Persian rugs of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fif-

11. K. Erdmann, "Orientalische Tierteppiche auf Bildern des XIV. und XV. Jahrhunderts," in *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, vol. L (1929), pp. 261-298.

12. F. Sarre and H. Trenkwalde, *Old Oriental Carpets* (Museum für Kunst und Industrie, Vienna), vol. II, pl. 1.

13. *Ibid.*, vol. II, pl. 2.

14. Erdmann, *op. cit.*, fig. 44.

15. *Ibid.*, figs. 17-20.

16. The Armenian theory was challenged first by Jacoby and later by Pope, who attributed these rugs to the region of Kuba in southern Caucasus. The Armenian scholar Sakisian has recently advanced good reasons in support of the earlier Armenian theory. As the Kuba region is also populated by Armenians it is not impossible that they were the makers of these rugs; see H. Jacoby, *Eine Sammlung orientalischer Teppiche*, pp. 39 ff.;

teenth centuries is very meager. Miniature paintings, which so often depict rugs in palaces and private residences, give us our only clue to the style of those earlier than the late fifteenth century. Some of the illustrations from the well-known fourteenth-century Demotte *Shah-nama* show rugs with geometrical patterns used as floor coverings. In one painting, now belonging to the Estate of V. Everit Macy, the central field of the rug is divided into squares, each of which contains interlaced ovals which form a pattern resembling a tile pavement. The border is separated from the field by three bands of geometric motives not unlike those on some of the early rugs from Asia Minor and has a design of Kufic writing in white on a red background. In a manuscript of Khwaju Kirmani in the British Museum dated A.H. 799 (A.D. 1396)<sup>17</sup> appear more elaborate geometric rugs, with designs showing polygons or star-shaped motives connected with each other by knots. The patterns of fourteenth-century rugs must have been designed by illuminators of contemporary manuscripts, such as the four large Korans made at the order of the Mongol emperor Uljaitu Kudabende Muhammad (1304-1316), which are counted among the greatest works of book decoration.<sup>18</sup> Each page is a masterpiece of abstract Islamic ornament, the supreme achievement of which was the arabesque.

The development of rug design in the fifteenth century, under the Timurid dynasty (1369-1500), was based to a great extent on Mongol traditions. Interesting rugs, often suggesting the so-called Holbein rugs of Asia Minor, are represented in the beautiful manuscript of the *Shah-nama*, in the Gulistan Museum at Teheran, copied and illustrated in 1429 for the Timurid sultan Baisunkur Mirza.<sup>19</sup> One of the rugs depicted in this manuscript is divided into compartments alternately red and green, another one shows hexagons in green and blue placed on a vermilion ground. In some of the rugs represented in Timurid minia-

A. U. Pope, "The Myth of the Armenian Dragon Carpets," in *Jahrbuch der asiatischen Kunst*, vol. II (1925), pp. 147-158; and A. Sakisian Bey, "Les Tapis à dragons et leur origine arménienne," in *Syria*, vol. VIII (1928), pp. 238-256.

17. F. R. Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India, and Turkey* . . . , vol. II, pls. 47, 48.

18. Ph. W. Schulz, *Die persisch-islamische Miniaturmalerei*, vol. II, pls. 94-103; G. Wiet, *L'Exposition persane de 1931* (Musée de l'art arabe du Caire), pp. 68-73.

19. L. Binyon, J. V. S. Wilkinson, and B. Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting*, pls. XLIII-L.



tures naturalistic stems with leaves have been introduced, but these are entirely subordinated to the geometric scheme of the design. Costumes, woven fabrics, and wall decorations as depicted in miniatures often display the naturalistic tendencies which the Mongols brought from China. Rug weaving seems to have resisted the invasion of floral design longer than other arts.

Late fifteenth-century miniatures by Bihzad and his followers are of great value to students of Oriental rugs. Representations of the traditional, geometric rug have almost disappeared, the prevailing type being the medallion or compartment rug decorated with arabesques and occasionally with floral scrolls. The outlines of the medallions and compartments, which show contrasting colors, are no longer angular as in earlier rugs but spherical. An interesting rug depicted in a double miniature by Bihzad in the Gulistan Museum at Teheran shows Sultan Husain Mirza in a garden.<sup>20</sup> It has a red ground and an all-over design of blue arabesques interlaced with floral scrolls bearing various flowers in white, red, and yellow or orange. The design may be regarded as a prototype of the patterns seen in many sixteenth-century rugs. In another miniature by Bihzad in a *Bustan* dated A.H. 893 (A.D. 1487), in the Khedivial Library at Cairo, we see a tent rug which is divided into spherical compartments containing not only arabesques and floral scrolls but also flying birds and animals, against a background of plants.<sup>21</sup> It is interesting as the prototype of Persian rugs in which birds and animals form part of the decoration. (Compare this rug with the compartment rug in the Metropolitan Museum, fig. 3.) Under Bihzad the school of Herat inaugurated a new style in painting, and to judge from the rugs represented in miniatures the Herat weavers must have been responsible for the change in Persian rug design. In 1510 Bihzad moved to Tabriz, the residence of the Safavid shahs, and with him went other painters and illuminators who influenced the development of rugs.

### PERSIAN RUGS OF THE XVI AND XVII CENTURIES

Early in the sixteenth century the Safavids, a new and powerful dynasty of Iranian origin, arose in northwestern Persia. In 1502 Shah Ismail, the

20. *Ibid.*, pl. LXVII.

21. *Ibid.*, pl. LXVIII.

founder of the dynasty, defeated the White Sheep Turkomans and established his capital at Tabriz. At this time began a new era in the history of Persian arts and crafts. Tabriz became one of the greatest centers of art, and the courts of the shahs, particularly in the time of Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576), were the gathering places of such great painters as Bihzad, Mirak, and Sultan Muhammad. The Safavid style of miniature painting also influenced such arts as weaving and rug knotting, which frequently borrowed their decorations from illustrations and illuminations of manuscripts. Under the Safavids, rug making was elevated to the plane of painting. A rug was no longer merely an object of daily use but a work of art produced by master weavers under the supervision of artists. With the exception of rugs made in pairs no two were alike. Besides Tabriz, centers of manufacture in this period were Kazwin and Kashan, cities in which at one time or another the Persian court resided.

All Safavid rugs show a division into field and border, the latter accompanied on each side by narrower guard bands. The function of the border was to accentuate the design of the field by means of contrast. It was not only different in pattern but also in color. The division of the field and the distribution of ornament were based on decorative principles evolved by Persian illuminators of the fifteenth century. As most of the large rugs were used as floor coverings, the most favored principle of composition was a symmetry which took into consideration the spectator's point of view and permitted him to see the design right side up from either end of the rug. This is particularly advantageous in patterns with representation of landscapes and living beings. The principal motives of Persian rug decoration are arabesques, floral scrolls, plants, Chinese cloud bands, and landscapes with animals, birds, and human figures. The greatest achievement of the Safavid rug designers was the combination of all the different motives and ornamental devices into beautiful patterns, of which there exist innumerable varieties. Persian poets were frequently inspired by the beauty of royal carpets to write verses in their praise. A famous rug in the Poldi-Pezzoli Museum in Milan<sup>22</sup> is inscribed with the following lines:

22. F. Sarre and H. Trenkwald, *Old Oriental Carpets* (Museum für Kunst und Industrie, Vienna), vol. II, pls. 29, 30.

O happy the carpet whose shadow at the banquet  
 so longed for lay under the footsteps of the king.  
 A countenance, in nature, like the sun, in the path  
 makes the carpet (before) his steps white wool.  
 This is no carpet, but a wild white rose;  
 it is a veil for the sight of the lustrous-eyed (houris).  
 It is a garden full of tulips and roses;  
 therefore has the nightingale made its abode there.  
 It has made plain the pucker of its lace-work;  
 streams of water flowing from every corner.  
 It shows the way to the fountain of life;  
 a picture of every wild beast has a place.  
 It is better than the cheeks of the ladies of Chegel;  
 a garden-plot is ashamed before its face.  
 Before its roses a rose-garden is but a thorn;  
 it is like the down, (beautiful) as the moon, on the cheek of the  
     adored one.  
 To the eye it is as a petal unsoiled,  
 as the locks of a houri braided together.  
 Every leaf appears without blemish to the sight;  
 from end to end are different blossoming tulips.  
 It is a bed of tulips, and yet not such that  
 through it there is a way for the cold winds of autumn.  
 When its yellow roses come in sight  
 a man does not look towards sun or moon.  
 Its weft is woven from the threads of life;  
 for the Darius of the world is it woven.  
 O phoenix, lift up the hands in prayer  
 that with a gift the end of the work may be completed.  
 Yea, Lord, this new rose is free from blemish  
 which has come forth from the garden of hope.  
 Let this carpet be in the path of the Darius of the world  
 A (healing) flower of his garden be his safety.

### *Medallion Rugs*

Persian rugs are generally classified into groups on the basis of their

knowledge of the latter still remains more or less hypothetical. At an early period Arab and Persian artists broke up the infinity of patterns either by diapers or by compartments of various sizes symmetrically dividing the field. Medallion rugs are characterized by central medallions of various shapes, to which are frequently attached at each end a cartouche and a pendant. An early medallion rug in the Ballard Collection has a sixteen-pointed central medallion,<sup>23</sup> while a rug in the Altman Collection<sup>24</sup> and a similar rug in the collection of George Blumenthal show each a central medallion with a cartouche and a shieldlike pendant attached above and below. The two latter belong to a group of rugs made at the court manufactory at Tabriz in the time of Shah Ismail (1502-1524) or early in the reign of Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576). In rugs of this type the field is decorated with arabesques and floral scrolls upon which are placed undulating Chinese cloud bands. The arabesques form graceful convolutions ending in palmettes, and the delicate floral scrolls interlacing with the arabesques bear various blossoms and rosettes. An interesting medallion rug lent by Myron C. Taylor is unusual in that its design is purely floral (fig. 2). The interlaced arabesque bands of the border are a feature of some of the early medallion rugs. In richness of color the Taylor rug surpasses many sixteenth-century rugs.

A magnificent early Safavid medallion rug with animal decoration is owned by Clarence H. Mackay (fig. 1). This important rug, sometimes called the "coronation carpet" as it was lent by the previous American owner for the coronation of Edward VII in Westminster Abbey in 1901, has never been shown before in any exhibition. It is one of the most precious early Persian rugs in existence, having many unique features of design. The center is occupied by a large red medallion containing forty-four flying cranes and two pairs of reclining gazelles. The drawing of the cranes, arranged in semicircles and separated from each other by Chinese cloud bands, reveals a remarkably keen observation of nature. The dynamic composition of birds is enhanced by the undulating cloud bands running in all directions. Attached to each end of the lobed central medallion are a cartouche, a small octagonal panel, and a trefoiled panel decorated with arabesques and floral motives. The rest of the field has a symmetrically arranged landscape of cypresses, blossom-

23. M. S. Dimand, *A Handbook of Mohammedan Decorative Arts* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art), fig. 144.

24. *Ibid.*, fig. 145.

ing trees, and shrubs in polychrome on a white ground. The animal groups form two units, each repeated four times in vertical and horizontal directions. One unit represents four animals in combat, a phoenix fighting a lion-kilin and a dragon giving battle to another fabulous creature; in the second unit a lion is attacking an ox, while other animals and birds are grazing or reclining peacefully. The color scheme is purely decorative, the various animals being rendered in red, yellow, blue, and other unnaturalistic colors. Some of the animals are drawn from life, others are creations of the imagination borrowed from Chinese art, where they were used as symbols. The Persians, adopting them, changed their meaning according to Iranian ideas (see p. 15).

Other interesting features of this rug are the red corner sections of the field, in which are shown two angels—one, in a sweeping, almost flying position, holds a wine bottle in her left hand while with her right she serves a cup of wine to her companion. Such representations are not unusual in Persian art. They occur frequently in miniature paintings and in rugs, as for instance in the famous imperial silk hunting rug in Vienna.<sup>25</sup> These angels, called *houris*, are the maidens of Paradise described in several sections of the Koran. They are said to possess great beauty, being compared to jacinths and pearls. They adorn themselves with many jewels and ornaments, and dwell in splendid palaces with female attendants. As described in the Koran, Paradise, or *Janna*, is the abode of the blessed: "This is the description of the paradise that has been promised to the pious; rivers whose water never becomes tainted, and rivers of milk whose taste changeth not; and rivers of wine the delight of those that drink of them. . . . (The elect) shall repose on couches the coverings of which shall be of brocade . . . there are young virgins with modest looks who have never been deflowered by man nor spirit. . . . We have created the women of paradise, the *houris*, by a special creation, we have preserved their virginity."<sup>26</sup> The corners of the Mackay rug and the border of the Vienna hunting rug are thus scenes from the Paradise of the Muhammadans.

Also worthy of note in the Mackay rug is the beautiful blue border with arabesques and floral scrolls, the latter bearing magnificent blossom-palmettes derived from the Chinese lotus and peony introduced

25. Sarre and Trenkwald, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pls. 1-5.

26. *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. I, p. 1015.

into Persia by the Mongols at the end of the thirteenth century. The Timurid illuminators developed a rich polychromy of floral design which was taken over by the Safavid artists, and they in turn created new varieties of blossom-palmettes which became essential elements of Persian rug decoration. The style of the Mackay rug indicates that it must have been woven in the early sixteenth century.

With the help of a few dated rugs we are able to establish a relative chronology of Safavid rugs. The earliest so far known is the medallion rug with hunting scenes in the Poldi-Pezzoli Museum in Milan.<sup>27</sup> It is inscribed with the date A.H. 929 (A.D. 1522/23) and the name of the maker Ghiyath ad-Din Jami, a signature found on a number of woven fabrics. This important rug has a red central medallion on a dark blue field. The medallion is surrounded by hunting scenes on a ground of angular floral scrolls and arabesques. According to the date the rug was woven in the time of Shah Ismail. The similarity in style between it and the Mackay rug indicates that the two are probably contemporary. The next in date are the famous medallion rug from the tomb mosque of Shaikh Safi at Ardebil, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London,<sup>28</sup> and its companion piece in a collection in New York. According to the inscriptions this pair was made or ordered by Maksud of Kashan as an offering to the holy shrine at Ardebil and finished in 1539. They are probably the work of Kashan looms. The decoration consists of an intricate floral pattern on a blue ground, rendered more naturalistically than in the Mackay and Milan rugs.

Also included in the exhibition is the famous compartment rug acquired by the Museum from the Yerkes Collection (fig. 3). No exhibition of rugs would be complete without this masterpiece of early Safavid rug knotting. It combines an elegance of design and a richness of color encountered in very few Persian rugs. Arabesques, palmette scrolls, the fight between the phoenix and the dragon, flying geese, lion-kilins, and cloud bands are placed in compartments of various colors—red, blue, green, and dark brown. The Persian cobalt blue of the cartouches contrasts effectively with the vermilion background of the border. Although

27. Sarre and Trenkwald, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pls. 22, 23; A. U. Pope, "Un Tappeto persiano del 1521 nel Museo Poldi-Pezzoli," in *Dedalo*, vol. VIII (1927), pp. 82-108.

28. Sarre and Trenkwald, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pls. 18-20; A. U. Pope, *Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition of Early Oriental Carpets* . . . , no. 6, pl. I.

the design of this rug has many Timurid elements, the Safavid style is predominant and the rug must be assigned to the early sixteenth century—that is, to the same period as the Mackay rug and the Milan hunting rug.

A splendid sixteenth-century medallion rug with animal decoration comes from the collection of Myron C. Taylor (fig. 4). The dark blue field has a red central medallion surrounded by a balanced design consisting of landscapes with blossoming trees and plants and various animals, single or in combat. The border is also red and has a pattern composed of intermittent scroll bands and panels in blue or tan inclosing pairs of animals in contrasting colors. The style is different from that of the Mackay rug although the design is similar. In the Taylor rug, which must be assigned to the period of Shah Tahmasp (1524–1576), there is greater realism in the treatment of landscapes and animals. The style is characteristic of a group of landscape and animal rugs woven in Tabriz, in which well-balanced designs are combined with subdued color schemes.

Another fine medallion and animal rug of the period of Shah Tahmasp has been lent by Joseph E. Widener. The yellow central medallion has a pattern of arabesques and cloud bands in red and blue. Placed symmetrically around the medallion are animals and delicate floral scrolls in colors which blend with the red background. The action of the animals is coördinated with the rhythm of the undulating scrolls. The design of the green border consists of an intermittent wavy band widened into arabesque forms in yellow and ending in blossom-palmettes with red ovals. The fan-shaped palmettes and the border design, as well as the color scheme, recall rugs with animal or floral decoration associated with the looms of Herat. Whether the Widener rug was woven in Herat or in some other center of rug making is at present difficult to ascertain.

### *Animal Rugs*

Rugs of this type have no medallions or other compartments, the animal decoration covering the whole field. This Museum is fortunate in possessing one of the finest early sixteenth-century animal rugs known. It comes from the tomb mosque of Shaikh Safi at Ardebil, together with

a rug in a private collection and its companion piece, the rug in London dated A.H. 946 (A.D. 1539/40). The Museum rug is a masterpiece of balance and rhythm. It is decorated with groups of animals disposed symmetrically—a lion and a tiger attacking a black stag and other animals running or reclining. The animals are ingeniously combined with floral scrolls bearing various blossoms in delicate colors set against a claret-red background. The design was originally enhanced by the use of silver threads, which are still preserved in some places. The deep blue border has a pattern of arabesques interlaced with Chinese cloud bands similar to those in some of the early sixteenth-century rugs mentioned above and attributed to the Tabriz looms.

An unusual animal rug which may be assigned to the middle of the sixteenth century has been lent anonymously.<sup>29</sup> The red ground is filled with animals, among which we recognize lions, tigers, oxen, deer, wild boars, and hares and various fabulous creatures—such as dragons, kilins, and phoenixes—running, pursuing, or attacking one another. The compartment design of the deep green border, the drawing of the blossom-palmettes, and the surface are characteristic of many rugs attributed to the Herat group mentioned above in connection with the Widener rug.

Related to the Herat group is an animal rug of a later variety, also lent anonymously. The whole space of the red inner field is filled with branches of blossoming trees and shrubs in a partly symmetrical arrangement. Conspicuous among the trees are two cypresses growing at the edge of a fish pond, and animals, single or in combat, appear between the trees and shrubs. The green border has a floral scroll with large blossom-palmettes and birds placed at intervals.

The animal decoration favored by Persian rug designers is deeply rooted in the Near East. The ancient Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians were fond of hunting, and beasts of the chase were frequently carved on the reliefs adorning their palaces. The animal combat so frequently seen in rugs seems to be a survival of the Iranian tradition of the struggle between the forces of Good and Evil, between Light and Darkness, or Ahuramazda and Ahriman. In this conflict, which goes on constantly, even animals participate, some of them, like the phoenix, on

29. Three rugs in the Museum collection are related to this animal rug, one illustrated in M. S. Dimand, *A Handbook of Mohammedan Decorative Arts* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art), fig. 148.



the side of Good, others, for instance the lion and the dragon, on the side of Evil.

### *Vase Rugs*

A distinct group of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century rugs with floral patterns takes its name from the vases introduced into the decoration. Technically vase rugs are peculiar in that all of them have double warps. There are two varieties, both of which are represented in the exhibition. A splendid example of the first type (fig. 5), lent by Clarence H. Mackay,<sup>30</sup> has a lozenge diaper formed by leafy stems inclosing a bold design of large, composite palmettes, floral sprays, and vases in rich colors. Numerous varieties of composite palmettes, each having a central motive framed by a series of petals in contrasting colors, are introduced into the design. The lilylike palmette seen in two of the lozenges is a characteristic motive of vase rugs. The decorative effect of this rare rug is enhanced still further by a change of ground color in the lozenges, which are in white, yellow, light blue, dark blue, and orange. The second type of vase rug is exemplified in the exhibition by a rug from a private collection in which the red ground is covered by a trellis with a floral pattern similar to that in the Mackay rug but with larger palmettes. On stylistic grounds rugs of the first type may be assigned to the late sixteenth century, and rugs of the second to the early seventeenth century. This chronology is furthermore substantiated by the existence of another vase rug and several floral rugs which may be even earlier than the types described above. Of particular importance is the vase rug in the Ottoman Museum in Istanbul which shows a lozenge diaper formed by lanceolate leaves and inclosing not one large motive, as in the Mackay rug, but four smaller palmettes and vases placed against a background of different colors.<sup>31</sup> This vase rug is perhaps the earliest specimen of the group.

Related to the vase rugs are certain floral rugs, which, without showing vases in their design, have all the other characteristics of vase rugs. In this category belongs a strikingly beautiful rug from the collection of Horace Havemeyer (fig. 6). It may be classed as a floral compartment

30. A companion piece is in the Schlossmuseum of Berlin; see F. Sarre and H. Trenkwald, *Old Oriental Carpets* (Museum für Kunst und Industrie, Vienna), vol. II, pl. 6.

31. W. von Bode and E. Kühnel, *Antique Rugs from the Near East*, fig. 35.

rug, as the whole field is divided into compartments forming cartouches or sections of cartouches in various colors—such as yellow, brown, pink, brick-red, salmon-red, wine-red, dark blue, light blue, and green. Within the compartments are single palmettes of the composite type familiar from the vase rugs. Among the floral motives is one which deserves special attention; its shape suggests a vase although formed of curling leaves. Because of its richness of ornament and brilliance of colors this unique rug is an outstanding example of Persian rug weaving.

The place where vase rugs were manufactured is still uncertain. For some time they were attributed to Kerman in southern Persia. Lately they have been assigned to Jushagan, near Ispahan, but so far we lack sufficient evidence for such an attribution. In many ways they resemble a group of Caucasian floral rugs which are related to the so-called dragon carpets mentioned on page 6. A Caucasian floral rug of exceptional importance has been lent anonymously (fig. 11). It comes from the mosque at Nigde in Asia Minor and is shown here for the first time in any exhibition. The bold pattern consists of a lozenge diaper in white, yellow, red, orange, dark blue, and green, inclosing large palmette devices and a few Chinese cloud bands. The palmette devices and polychromy are strongly reminiscent of the Mackay vase rug and the one in Istanbul. It is not easy at present to explain the similarity between Caucasian and vase rugs.

### *Rugs with Floral Design*

One of the most familiar types of Oriental rugs is that sometimes known as Ispahan but properly attributed to the looms of Herat. The weavers of the province of Khorasan had a great reputation, and Olearius, who visited Persia about 1637, reported that the handsomest rugs were produced at Herat. These rugs, made in great quantities, vary considerably both in size and in quality. Usually the pattern consists of a dense all-over design of floral scrolls bearing a variety of blossom-palmettes intertwined with Chinese cloud bands; the field is red, the border dark green or blue. Rugs of this type are depicted frequently in paintings by Dutch and Spanish masters of the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century.

In the decoration of sixteenth-century floral rugs appear the fan-

shaped motives with serrated outlines which are characteristic of Herat rugs with animal and floral decoration (see p. 15). A fine sixteenth-century Herat floral rug is in the Ballard Collection.<sup>32</sup> In seventeenth-century rugs of the Herat type the blossom-palmettes are much larger and curling lanceolate leaves have been added to the decoration. Two rugs from the collection of Dr. Preston P. Satterwhite show all the fine qualities of early seventeenth-century design (cf. fig. 7). Later seventeenth-century examples are generally less elegant in design and less harmonious in color, showing purplish tints not found in early examples.

In the Mughal period quantities of Herat rugs were exported to India and copied at Lahore and Agra in the state manufactories of Akbar (1556-1605) and Jahangir (1605-1628). Indian "Ispahans" are often mistaken for Persian as there is little difference in the designs. The only way to recognize the Indian copies is by the colors, among which appear a reddish brown and a shade of orange unknown in true Herat rugs.

### *Silk Rugs*

The most luxurious products of the Persian court manufactories during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were knotted silk rugs, often enriched with brocading in silver and silver-gilt threads. These rugs were made for the use of the court and were frequently presented as gifts to foreign rulers. Mentioned among the gifts brought by the Persian ambassador to Adrianople in 1566 on the occasion of the accession to the throne of Selim II were twenty large silk rugs and many small ones, decorated with birds, animals, and flowers brocaded in gold.<sup>33</sup> Only three large silk rugs dating from the sixteenth century are known today: the famous imperial hunting rug in Vienna, the hunting rug in Paris in the collection of Baron Maurice Rothschild,<sup>34</sup> and a rug in Stockholm in the collection of the Royal House of Sweden.<sup>35</sup> The rug in Vienna is one of the greatest Persian rugs ever woven. Its decoration

32. M. S. Dimand, *A Handbook of Mohammedan Decorative Arts* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art), fig. 152.

33. F. R. Martin, *Die persischen Prachtstoffe im Schlosse Rosenberg in Kopenhagen*, p. 12.

34. F. Sarre and H. Trenkwald, *Old Oriental Carpets* (Museum für Kunst und Industrie, Vienna), vol. II, pls. 24-26.

35. F. R. Martin, *A History of Oriental Carpets before 1800*, pls. IV, V.

consists of hunting scenes resembling contemporary miniature paintings, particularly those of Sultan Muhammad, the celebrated court painter of Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576). It is quite probable that the Vienna rug was designed by this great artist.

Fortunately a far greater number of small silk rugs have survived, and these are to be found in museums and private collections here and abroad. Two are in the exhibition, a medallion rug from the collection of Joseph E. Widener and a rug with animal decoration lent anonymously. In the Widener rug (fig. 8) the center of the red field is occupied by an eight-pointed lobed medallion and six green cartouches connected by stems and filled with Chinese cloud bands. In the corners are sections of medallions joined by sections of cartouches and trefoils. The ground of the field has floral stems issuing from various points and bearing numerous blossoms. The beautiful blue ground of the border forms a rich contrast to the red of the field and the green of the cartouches. Its decoration includes trefoiled red panels inclosing palmettes placed at intervals. Delicate red tendrils with blossoms and Chinese cloud motives enliven the intervening spaces. Not less harmonious in color and design is the silk animal rug. Six rows of animals—panthers, tigers, lions, and deer, single or in combat—are placed in a landscape with flowering plants and mountains on a ground of vivid and lustrous crimson. The blue-green border has an interesting design of pairs of dragons, back to back, alternating with pairs of phoenixes, back to back, in red or black (owing to the chemical action of the dyes, which contain iron, most of the wool dyed black has rotted away). The dragon motive appears in the Vienna hunting rug and a number of others. The color scheme, similar to that of a silk animal rug in the Altman Collection,<sup>36</sup> is green and red, with touches of other colors, particularly yellow and blue.

Small silk rugs of the sixteenth century have been generally attributed to Kashan, which was famous for its velvets and brocades. Often the knotting of these fine rugs is so close that their texture approaches that of the Persian velvets—as for example in the animal rug described above, which has about eight hundred knots to the square inch. Whether Kashan was the place where they were woven it is difficult to say. The report on the Persian embassy of 1566 (see p. 27) also mentions silk

36. Sarre and Trenkwald, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pl. 39.

rugs of Hamadan, but there is no other evidence that this place was a center of Safavid rug weaving.

The manufacture of silk rugs continued during the seventeenth century. In the time of Shah Abbas (1587-1628) and Shah Safi I (1629-1642) the state manufactories at Ispahan produced silk rugs woven in delicate colors, with pastel shades predominating, and brocaded with gold and silver threads. Such rugs are usually referred to as "Polish" or "Polonaise" because of the fact that for a long time they were thought to be the product of Polish looms.<sup>37</sup> Although forming a separate group they are not without relation to other types of Persian rugs. Their designs recall some of the Herat floral rugs of the so-called Ispahan variety and in their color schemes they are related to the floral rugs classed as vase rugs.

Silk rugs brocaded in silver and gold were often mentioned by seventeenth-century travelers. Sir Thomas Herbert, who traveled in Persia from 1627 to 1629, in the time of Shah Abbas, describes the rooms of the palace of Ispahan as follows: "Within, the rooms . . . are arched, enlightened by trellises; . . . embossed above, and painted with red, white, blue, and gold; the sides painted with sports and landscape; the ground, or floor, spread with carpets of silk and gold, without other furniture. . . ."<sup>38</sup> Tavernier, the French merchant, writes about his reception at the court of Ispahan on December 29, 1664: "After I had expos'd my Goods upon a fair Table cover'd with a Carpet of Gold and Silver, and that the *Nazar* had dispos'd every thing in order with his own hand, the King enter'd, attended only by three Eunuchs for his Guard, and two old men, whose office it was to pull off his Shooes when he goes into any Room spread with Gold and Silk Carpets, and to put them on again when he goes forth."<sup>39</sup> The great hall of the palace of Ispahan was also covered with costly silk rugs. "In the middle of the Hall was a Vase of excellent Marble, with a Fountain throwing out Water after several manners. The Floor was spread with Gold and Silk Carpets, made on purpose for the place; and near to the Vase was a low Scaffold one Foot

37. None are included in the present exhibition, as the Museum held a special exhibition of "Polish" rugs in the summer of 1930; see M. S. Dimand, *Loan Exhibition of Persian Rugs of the So-called Polish Type*.

38. *Travels in Persia, 1627-1629*, p. 128.

39. *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier, Baron of Aubonne*, p. 177.

high, twelve Foot long, and eight wide, cover'd with a magnificent Carpet. Upon this Scaffold sate the King upon a four-square Cushion of Cloth of Gold, with another Cushion behind him cover'd with the same, set up against a great Tap'stry-Hanging, wrought with Persian Characters, containing the Mysteries of the Law."<sup>40</sup>

### PERSIAN TAPESTRIES

Tapestry weaving, generally considered to be the earliest method of making rugs, was practiced in Persia in the time of the Sasanian dynasty (226-637). There is little doubt that the art continued during the Muhammadan era, although not a single example earlier than the sixteenth century has been preserved. Two tapestry-woven rugs of the early seventeenth century are included in the exhibition, one lent by the Louvre (fig. 10), the other by The William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City (fig. 9). The Louvre piece represents the pictorial style—the center medallion showing a horseman (Rustam?) fighting a dragon, the corner sections scenes from the story of Laila and Majnun. The design of the Louvre tapestry is executed in subdued colors, while the tapestry from the Kansas City museum is characterized by brilliant polychromy and by the lavish use of gold.<sup>41</sup> The field is occupied by a central medallion, two animal groups, and floral scrolls; the blue border with cartouches in contrasting colors adds to the striking effect. It is probable that both tapestries were woven at the court looms of Shah Abbas. The most likely provenance is Ispahan, although other centers are possible. Mentioned among the gifts brought to Adrianople by the Persian envoy in 1566 are tapestries of Darabjird, indicating that this city in southern Persia may have been a center of tapestry weaving.

### INDIAN RUGS

The conquest of India by Babur (1526-1530), a descendant of Timur, or Tamerlane, introduced Persian art and culture into India. The Mughal school of painting was founded by the Persian artists Mir Say-

40. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

41. A tapestry with similar richness of color is in the Residenz Museum, Munich; see F. Sarre and H. Trenkwald. *Old Oriental Carpets* (Museum für Kunst und Industrie, Vienna), vol. II, pls. 47, 48.

yid Ali and Abdus Samad, who were brought to India by the Emperor Humayun (1530-1556). In the time of Akbar (1556-1605) and Jahangir (1605-1628) Persian influence was still predominant at the Mughal court, but Indian and European elements were gradually being introduced. In Akbar's reign Hindu artists worked under the guidance of Persian painters, often copying miniatures by such celebrated artists as Bihzad, Mirak, and Sultan Muhammad. In other arts and crafts similar conditions prevailed. According to the historian Abu'l-Fazl, Akbar "caused rugs to be made of wonderful variety and charming textures; he has appointed experienced workmen who have produced many masterpieces. The carpets of Iran and Turan are no more thought of, although merchants still import rugs from Jashagan (between Kashan and Isfahan), Khuzistan (in which province Tuster is the chief town), Kirman and Sabzawar (in Khurasan). All kinds of rug weavers have settled here and drive a flourishing trade. These are found in every town, especially in Agra, Fathpur and Lahore."<sup>42</sup> Rugs represented in Mughal paintings of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, particularly those in the large illustrations of the *Amir Hamza*, a fantastic narrative of adventure, are similar to the Herat floral rugs (see p. 17). As I have stated before, a number of rugs of this type, called Indian "Ispahans," are in existence and are often wrongly regarded as Persian.

Gradually the Hindu weavers introduced into rug design naturalistic plants, flowers, and figure subjects typically Indian. Two such rugs may be seen in the exhibition. One has been lent by Joseph E. Widener, the other by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Widener rug may be classified as an animal rug. The red field is covered with floral scrolls upon which are placed various animals, singly or in groups, running in various directions or attacking one another. We recognize a crocodile, a dragon, a deer, a lion, a tiger, a rhinoceros, an elephant, and Chinese kilins. In the center of the rug appears a courtier riding an elephant. The border is also red with pink arabesques and blue quatrefoils alternating with white cartouches. The quatrefoils contain birds, the cartouches floral scrolls, each with a human head in the center. It is evident that a Persian animal rug served as a model for this Mughal rug,

42. F. R. Martin, *A History of Oriental Carpets before 1800*, pp. 88-89.

which may be assigned to the end of Akbar's reign or the beginning of Jahangir's. In composition, however, it is notably different from Persian rugs. The Persian artists followed certain rules in the distribution of ornament, placing the animals either in symmetrical arrangement or in rows. The design of Indian rugs shows considerably more freedom, the decorative principles of Persian art being frequently disregarded.

The Mughal pictorial style is even more evident in the rug lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (fig. 12). Here various mythological scenes, figure subjects, and animals are combined without any relation to one other. The landscape is indicated by several large trees and shrubs against a red background. The figure subjects consist of several groups derived from miniature paintings. We see a domestic interior and a garden scene in which are two men conversing and a Hindu woman. In the middle of the rug is a representation of a hunting party returning from the chase: a man carrying a dead black panther is followed by an oxcart on which a hunting cheetah is standing attended by a man with a sword and a fly whisk. The lower part of the rug is purely Indian in conception: a winged elephant-monster seizes seven black elephants and is himself attacked by a phoenix. The yellow border shows palmettes inclosing masks of demons and flanked by blue birds and blossom stems. A Persian origin is still evident in the design of the border, but in the execution of details and in the pictorial style of the field the rug has little of the Persian spirit. To judge from the costumes it may be assigned to the period of Jahangir.

The native Hindu style was fully developed in the time of Shah Jahan (1628-1658), and in technical skill the Indian weavers often surpassed their Persian masters. Most of the rugs made under this ruler are decorated with realistic plants in rows or in a trellis framework. In the Altman Collection are several magnificent floral rugs of the period of Shah Jahan.<sup>43</sup> Often the pile of the woolen rugs is of such fine quality that they are mistaken for silk rugs. Silk rugs were also woven in India, some of them being so closely knotted their texture resembles that of velvets. A fragment of a silk rug in the Altman Collection has the incredible number of 2,552 knots to the square inch.

43. In the collection of the Maharajah of Jaipur are a number of rugs in the Hindu style originally made for the palace at Amber; see T. H. Hendley, *Asian Carpets: XVI. and XVII. Century Designs from the Jaipur Palaces*.



*TURKISH RUGS*

Turkish rugs may be divided into two main branches: court rugs and peasant rugs. As previously stated (p. 5) rug knotting was introduced into Asia Minor by the Seljuks, who came from Central Asia. The Seljuk style, which we have characterized as a geometric one, continued in later periods and is to be found in most of the peasant rugs of Asia Minor dating from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.

With the dynasty founded by Othman (1299-1326) began a new chapter in the arts of Asia Minor. In 1326 Brusa became the capital of the new Ottoman Empire and at the same time an important center of Turkish art. Persian influence became stronger during the fifteenth century. The prayer niche (mihrab) of the Green Mosque, built during the reign of Muhammad I (1402-1421), was the work of masters from Tabriz. In the sixteenth century, especially in the time of Sulaiman the Magnificent (1520-1566), many Persian artists worked at the Turkish court in Constantinople, which had been the capital of the empire since 1453.

A group of floral rugs long associated with Damascus is now properly assigned to the court manufactory at Constantinople established by Sulaiman. Rugs of this type have patterns of floral scrolls with palmettes and curving lanceolate leaves derived from Persian art. Among the floral motives appear naturalistic flowers, such as hyacinths, tulips, and carnations, familiar to us from the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pottery of Iznik and Kutahia in Asia Minor. Green or crimson is featured as the ground color of both the field and the borders. A rare and unusual Turkish rug comes from the collection of George Blumenthal (fig. 13). On a red ground are six circular medallions and medallion sections containing arabesques in blue, red, and orange on a yellow ground. The rest of the field is covered with plants, lanceolate leaves, and palmette devices in yellow, orange, green, red, and light and dark blue. The red border has scrolls with panels inclosing hyacinths, roses, and tulips. Cloud bands in graceful lines undulate over the stems. Outstanding among the rich colors is the characteristic Turkish green.

A beautiful Turkish prayer rug has been lent by Mrs. William H. Moore (fig. 14). The red field has a niche with two columns, in which a mosque lamp is hanging. The yellow border has a floral pattern con-

sisting of palmettes, lanceolate leaves, carnations, tulips, and hyacinths in rich colors with dark red and green predominating. A fine rug in the Ballard Collection has a similar border design carried out in more brilliant colors. Turkish prayer rugs of this type,<sup>44</sup> made during the seventeenth century in the court manufactories of Constantinople, are of great interest to students as they are the prototypes of the eighteenth-century Anatolian prayer rugs of the Ghiordes and Kula varieties.<sup>45</sup> In the Ghiordes rugs we are able to follow the gradual decadence of the floral design, which the peasant weavers often misunderstood or deliberately simplified.

### EGYPTIAN RUGS

Rugs with geometrical designs in imitation of tile or mosaic patterns in red, yellow, blue, and green were long associated with Damascus. Because of many analogies with Mamluk ornament, however, they have recently been assigned to Egyptian manufactories.<sup>46</sup> This attribution is confirmed by literary sources of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which mention "Egyptian" rugs. As Egypt was in the hands of the Ottoman Turks from 1517 to 1805, it is probable that many of the rugs woven there during this period passed as Turkish. An interesting Egyptian rug has been lent for the exhibition by George Blumenthal (fig. 15).

### THE EARLY HISTORY OF PERSIAN SILK WEAVING

The history of Persian silk weaving goes back to the Sasanian period (226-637), when the looms of Persia and Mesopotamia produced silk fabrics of very fine quality and in a great variety of patterns and color schemes. Sasanian textiles in polychrome silk, such as the famous stuff in the treasury of the Sancta Sanctorum in Rome, are decorated with repeat patterns of stylized birds, griffins, and hunting scenes within medallions.<sup>47</sup> Sasanian silks were justly famous in the East and West, and

44. W. von Bode and E. Kühnel, *Antique Rugs from the Near East*, figs. 90, 95.

45. The Ballard Collection in this Museum contains representative specimens of Turkish peasant and nomad rugs which are not shown in this exhibition; see J. Breck and F. Morris, *The James F. Ballard Collection of Oriental Rugs*.

46. F. Sarre, "Die ägyptische Herkunft der sogenannten Damaskus Teppiche," in *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, vol. XXXII (1921), pp. 75-82.

47. H. Grisar, *Die römische Kapelle Sancta Sanctorum*, fig. 71.

many of them have been found in Egyptian tombs of the Christian era, particularly in those of Antinoë.

After the conquest of Persia by the Muhammadans Sasanian traditions continued for several centuries. Textiles woven between the seventh and tenth centuries show for the most part the favorite Sasanian pattern of circular medallions with conventionalized animals, as for instance the elephant fabrics in the cathedral of Sens and in the Cooper Union Museum in New York. An important tenth-century example in the Louvre<sup>48</sup> has a pattern of confronted elephants bordered by a design of stylized camels and peacocks in rich colors reminiscent of the Sasanian era. This piece and other Persian silks found in Chinese Turkestan were woven in Khorasan or western Turkestan.

The arrival of the Turkish Seljuks brought about a considerable change in the designs of Persian textiles. Animal motives were still used as in the Sasanian period, but they were entirely different in style, taking on the elegance and the sweeping contours of the arabesque, an ornament which the Seljuks developed to perfection.<sup>49</sup> Color schemes in two tones, such as brown and white, black and white, or shades of blue-green, were most common. The Seljuk style of weaving prevailed throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, until the Mongol invasion of Persia. Rai (or Rhages) has yielded most of the Seljuk textiles, one of which is in the Museum collection.

The Mongols introduced further changes in the style of Persian weaving. Unfortunately there are no Persian woven fabrics in existence which can be attributed with certainty to the fourteenth century, but contemporary miniature paintings give us an idea of the materials which were used for costumes, hangings, and cushion covers. Some of the coats worn by the Mongols have an all-over pattern of floral motives, others have collars embroidered or woven in gold or inwoven panels in front and back showing animals in a landscape rendered in the Chinese style. Many of these fabrics were probably made in China and then imported into Persia and other provinces of the Mongol empire. The Mongol style of costume decoration continued during the fifteenth century under the Timurids, who in many ways imitated their predecessors. To the

48. G. Migeon, *L'Orient musulman*, fig. 39.

49. *An Illustrated Souvenir of the Exhibition of Persian Art, London, 1931*, pp. 68, 69.

Timurid period may be attributed a collar in the Armory of Moscow, embroidered with naturalistic floral designs and angels in gold.<sup>50</sup>

### THE SILK WEAVING OF THE SAFAVID PERIOD (XVI-XVII CENTURY)

With the sixteenth century begins the golden era of Persian weaving. The court life of the Safavid rulers was luxurious in the extreme and costly apparel was in great demand by princes and nobles, thus giving a sudden impetus to the art of weaving. Persian miniatures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries picture contemporary costumes with elaborate designs of palmettes or floral motives. The sumptuous costumes of the sixteenth century are described in various documents. In 1566 the Persian envoy and his following of three hundred Persians arrived in Adrianople dressed in garments with figures of birds and animals woven in various colors. At his reception at the court of the Turkish sultan, Selim II, in 1579 the Persian envoy was dressed in an overgarment of red velvet bordered by a floral design and an undergarment decorated with figure subjects.<sup>51</sup> His Moorish followers wore costumes of gold stuffs, velvets, and silks with interwoven figures of lions, tigers, horses, and human beings.

The technical perfection of the silk weaves, brocades, and velvets produced in court manufactories of Kashan and Yezd in the sixteenth century was due to the splendid organization of the looms, which were under the supervision of court artists. One of the earliest pieces in the exhibition is a silk weave from the Museum collection. It originally formed part of a costume and is decorated with a repeat design of a Safavid noble, holding a wine bottle and a cup and standing in a rocky landscape with cypress and cherry trees, animals, and birds in polychrome on a yellow satin ground. The composition is derived from miniature paintings in the style of Sultan Muhammad, court painter to Shah Tahmasp. Other sixteenth-century textiles also show this strong relation to miniature painting.

50. F. R. Martin, *Figurale persische Stoffe aus dem Zeitraum 1550-1650*, pl. X.

51. A. F. Kendrick and T. W. Arnold, "Persian Stuffs with Figure-Subjects," in *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. XXXVII (1920), pp. 237-244.

Two brocades lent by the Cooper Union Museum depict the popular story of the Bedouin lovers Laila and Majnun, familiar as the subject of a poem by the celebrated Nizami. In one, of special importance as it bears the name of the weaver, Ghiyath,<sup>52</sup> the repeat design represents Laila in a litter on the back of a camel, looking down on Majnun (fig. 16). The excellent drawing of the animals surrounding Majnun, particularly of the stag turning its head around, reveals the intimate observation of nature that we find in some contemporary miniatures. The color scheme is carried out in silver, light green, and light blue on a dark brown ground. The other textile has a repeat design of Laila visiting Majnun, who is seated on a rock under a tree, holding a gazelle (fig. 17). The groups are arranged in horizontal rows, the direction of the figures changing in alternate rows. The style of the slender figures recalls the miniature paintings and tinted drawings of Ustad Muhammad, a master who worked in the second half of the sixteenth century. The simplicity of the color scheme, woven in red and white with the addition of silver threads, is extremely effective. The technique of the weave, found in a few other fabrics, is especially fine.

Of great beauty are the sixteenth-century Persian velvets with lustrous silk pile enhanced by brocading. A velvet lent by the Estate of V. Everit Macy has a red ground with a repeat pattern of lobed medallions in gold, each inclosing two figures, a princely falconer and a servant, separated by a tree (fig. 18). The brilliant red of the ground contrasts harmoniously with the delicate colors of the decoration. A circular velvet with a hole in the center, lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, originally formed the top of a tent decoration (fig. 19). Together with a set of panels, two of which are in the Museum collection, it is said to have belonged to Sulaiman I and to have been used by Kara Mustapha Pasha in 1683 during the second siege of Vienna, when the Turks were defeated by the Polish king Jan Sobieski. The Boston velvet is decorated with hunting scenes in polychrome silk on a gold background consisting of thin silver-gilt lamellae. Such lamellae are not

52. Several names of weavers are known: Ghiyath, Abdallah, Ian Muhammad, and Mu'izz ad-Din, son of Ghiyath. Two fragments of a silk weave in this Museum are dated A.H. 1008 (A.D. 1599/1600) and bear the name of the weaver Husain (?); see M. S. Dimand, *A Handbook of Mohammedan Decorative Arts* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art), fig. 131.

very frequent in Persian textiles. In most brocades the metal threads are formed by silver or silver-gilt strips wound around silk cores.

At the end of the sixteenth century, under Shah Abbas, Persian weaving received a new impetus. Royal manufactories were established in Ispahan, the new capital of Persia, which now became the center of arts and crafts. Figure subjects were used as before, but in floral patterns naturalistic versions of such flowers as irises, carnations, and roses replaced palmettes. Pastel shades were more often used than the strong, contrasting colors favored by sixteenth-century weavers. The brocades and velvets of the seventeenth century were designed for garments, hangings, and carpets. The French traveler Chardin, who visited Persia at the end of the seventeenth century and spent a long time in Ispahan, gives an interesting account of the manufacture and the various types of Persian silk weaves: "They call brocade *Zerbafé*, which means gold fabric. There are simple ones, of a hundred kinds; double ones called *Ouroye*, which means double-faced, because they have no wrong side; and *Machmely Zerbafé*, or gold velvet. They make gold brocades, valued up to fifty *tomans* a yard, which is in our measure two feet and a quarter, which makes about thirty thalers for an inch, or eleven hundred thalers an aune [46.5 in.]. Such costly fabrics are made nowhere else in the world. Five or six men at once are employed at the loom where they make this sumptuous fabric, and there are up to twenty-four or thirty different shuttles to be passed, in place of the two ordinarily used. In spite of the incredible price of this precious brocade, the workers who are engaged in making it do not earn more than fifteen to sixteen sols [twenty sols equaled approximately one franc] daily. . . . These expensive brocades are made into curtains and hangings, which are universally used and are the most ordinary furnishings of a house, and into cushions. The gold velvets which are made in Persia are very beautiful. . . . The particular excellence of these beautiful fabrics is that they last forever, so to speak, and that the gold and silver last as long as the fabric, which always keeps its brilliancy and color. It is true that silver darkens at length after twenty or thirty years of service; but even then, it does not decay or fall out; this I believe is due just as much to the good air as to the perfection of the work. The finest looms for these fabrics are at Yezd, Kashan, and Ispahan."<sup>53</sup>

53. *Voyages de Monsieur le Chevalier Chardin en Perse* . . . , vol. II, p. 86.

The Persian garments of the seventeenth century are sumptuously decorated with large figures, landscapes with animals, and floral designs. The finest complete coat of the Shah Abbas period is preserved in the Royal Armory at Stockholm.<sup>54</sup> It is bell-shaped and made of velvet brocade decorated with a repeat design of large figures of a youth holding a wine bottle and a cup. The long coat and the turban worn by the youths represented on this coat are typical of the seventeenth century. Parts of a velvet, probably from a coat with similar large figures, are in several museums here and abroad. A piece in the exhibition, lent by The Art Institute of Chicago (fig. 20), shows a repeat design of two youths separated by a cypress tree, woven in polychrome silk and silver threads on a gold ground.

A particularly fine brocade (fig. 21), probably a portion of a garment, is lent by the Estate of V. Everit Macy. The silver ground has a rich floral design of carnations, irises, and other flowers naturalistically treated, growing out of parallel wavy bands. The colors, white, pink, orange, lilac, blue, and green blend harmoniously with the metal background. The soft colors, with orange and green predominating, are characteristic of most of the brocades of the Shah Abbas period, as for instance the beautiful silver brocade lent by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (fig. 22).

An integral part of the Persian costume of the late sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries was the sash, the use of which spread to the countries of eastern Europe, especially Russia and Poland. Several sashes, of gold brocade richly decorated with floral patterns in soft colors, may be seen in the exhibition. Two, dating from the seventeenth century, are the property of the Museum, the third, an eighteenth-century example, is a loan from Miss Lucy T. Aldrich. Characteristic features are the broad end panels decorated with growing plants or floral devices in pastel shades on a gold ground.

A masterpiece of the Shah Abbas period and one of the most important velvets in existence has been generously lent by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (fig. 23). This complete piece, used probably as a throne cover, is decorated with three flowering trees—forming the structure of

54. F. R. Martin, *Figurale persische Stoffe aus dem Zeitraum 1550–1650*, pl. I. On Persian costumes see J. U. Upton, "Notes on Persian Costumes of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Metropolitan Museum Studies*, vol. II (1930), part 2, pp. 206–220.

the composition—and lily, iris, carnation, and rose plants, with birds perched on their branches. The colors are white, yellow, pink, brown, light blue, dark blue, green, and black, with a few touches of red, on a ground of golden yellow, without any metal thread. The narrow blue border, decorated with intermittent arabesques and palmettes, recalls some of the silk rugs of the so-called Polish type, and it is probable that this velvet and the silk rugs were made in the same manufactory, possibly at Ispahan. The harmonious blending of color is based on the principle favored by the weavers of the Shah Abbas period.

Velvets of the seventeenth century were also made up into hangings and carpets of various sizes. A very fine hanging has been lent by the Estate of V. Everit Macy, while the largest velvet carpet known is from the Museum collection.<sup>55</sup> Together with a companion piece in a private collection in New York, the latter came from the collection of the Royal House of Saxony, to which it had belonged since the late seventeenth century. The field design, with floral scrolls and two large medallions, partly follows the pattern of knotted rugs. In the gold field red and green predominate, while in the silver border yellow, orange, and green are the chief colors.

Two examples of Persian embroidery from the Museum collection are also shown in the exhibition. A very fine seventeenth-century cover, worked in satin stitch, is decorated with figure subjects and animals in rich colors on a black background. Such embroideries are rightly attributed to northwestern Persia. Stylistically they are related to embroideries from the neighboring Caucasus, but the latter show lighter colors and are worked in a double darning stitch. Most eighteenth-century embroideries are from women's trousers and are called *nakhshe* in Persia and *gilets persans* in Europe. Dense floral design in soft colors covers the surface.

### TURKISH TEXTILES

The foundation of Turkish weaving in Asia Minor and European Turkey goes back to the Seljuk period. A thirteenth-century brocade in the Textile Museum at Lyon is decorated with confronted lions in arches bearing the name of Sultan Kai-Kubad, either the first (1219-1237) or

55. Dimand, *op. cit.*, fig. 132.



the second (1246-1267).<sup>56</sup> No textiles from the early Ottoman period, however, have been preserved. Although a few pieces have been assigned to the late fifteenth century by analogy with costumes worn by figures in Italian paintings of the fifteenth century, particularly those by Gentile Bellini (1429-1507), who worked for some time at the court of the Turkish sultans. The vast majority of existing brocades and velvets, however, date from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Brusa, which was the early capital of the Ottoman Turks, was the chief center of Turkish weaving, but other places, such as Scutari and Herek, were also known for their fine textiles.

The patterns of Turkish brocades and velvets are not so varied as those of Persian. The designers were limited to floral patterns, because of the fact that the Turks belonged to the Sunnite sect of the Muhammadan religion and followed more strictly the Tradition of the Prophet prohibiting representations of living creatures. Although influenced by Persian and Italian art, the Turks evolved a style of their own, which is most familiar perhaps from the ceramics made at Kutahia and Isnik in Asia Minor. From Persia they borrowed the floral scroll with palmette devices, from Italy the pomegranate and other motives found in Venetian velvets of the fifteenth century. Italian designs were adapted by the Turkish weavers to their own style, and the finished products were exported to Italy. Velvets made in Brusa are sometimes taken for Italian, but the Turkish weaves should be easily recognized not only by their designs but also by their technique, which is less elaborate than that of Italian velvets. These Italianate velvet brocades may be assigned to the sixteenth century. In the Museum collection are several fine examples, two of which are shown in the exhibition.

Turkish velvets, of which the Museum possesses an unusually fine and representative collection, have in general a much bolder design than the brocades. Velvets were used mostly for hangings, covers for cushions, and, less frequently, for costumes. Several complete covers with field and border are known, two being shown in the exhibition. In the sixteenth-century velvets showing Italian influence the ground is usually in red while the pattern is in gold, often with the addition of silver threads. A mixture of Italian and Turkish design is seen in a large velvet decorated

56. O. von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, vol. I, fig. 162.

with a repeat pattern of devices formed of cones and lanceolate leaves overlaid with sprays of carnations, roses, and hyacinths. Turkish velvets in which the decoration is entirely Oriental frequently have designs consisting of large stylized carnations arranged in a repeat pattern and inclosing floral sprays in red, blue, gold, and silver on a red ground (cf. fig. 24). Velvets with stylized designs in red, gold, and silver (occasionally green and silver) may be assigned to the sixteenth century; those with a naturalistic treatment of floral motives and with a color scheme which includes blue are probably all of the seventeenth century. Noteworthy are two complete velvet covers with borders from the Museum collection. In one, which probably dates from the seventeenth century, the field has an ogival diaper with floral design in red, gold, and silver, while the border has a design of small cartouches and floral branches in red and gold on a silver ground. The other cover has an effective pattern of large circular medallions which extend beyond the field, overlapping the border. Several fine cushion covers of velvet from the Museum collection illustrate the development of patterns from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. In the field we may see either palmette-shaped compartments or lobed medallions inclosing floral devices on a red background. In the lappet borders we may see either carnations or roses—more frequently the latter.

The color schemes of Turkish brocades are not so rich as those of Persian and are usually limited to two or three colors such as gold and red or red and blue on gold, with touches of green. The backgrounds are usually red but occasionally blue, green, or purple. The most characteristic pattern of Turkish brocades consists of diapers forming ogival compartments filled with sprays of carnations, tulips, hyacinths, roses, and other flowers. A magnificent sixteenth-century brocade, probably from a costume, has been lent by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (fig. 25). The ogival compartments in gold inclose floral sprays in white, red, and purple and are bordered by plants on a deep purple ground, producing a highly decorative effect. Most of the brocades were used for garments. Three robes are shown in the exhibition, two of them vestments lent by The Rhode Island School of Design (cf. fig. 27), the third a coat from the Museum collection (fig. 26). All have gold grounds, two with floral patterns, the third with "tiger stripes," three balls, and crosses. The last motive proves that the fabric was originally made for Christian use.

*INDIAN TEXTILES*

The beginnings of the textile arts in India may be traced back to remote antiquity. The weaving of fine cotton muslins is an ancient Indian craft which has survived until modern times. Of ancient Indian origin also are two methods of decorating fabrics, block printing and resist dyeing, which Mughal artists of the seventeenth century brought to a high degree of perfection. Printed and painted cottons of Masulipatam were well known in England and America under the names palampores and pintadoes. Printing and painting were also applied to garments, which were generally of cotton, as for instance the Museum's splendid seventeenth-century court robe decorated with a repeat design of blossoms in red and gold (fig. 28). The cut is entirely different from that of Persian garments, being related to the Mongol and Chinese styles which were introduced into India before the Mughal period. Some of the textiles are printed and painted on unusually fine muslin, which was a specialty of Dacca in Bengal. Dacca muslins were so fine that they were called "running water," "woven air," and "evening dew."

The Indian textiles shown in the exhibition represent all the known types of Hindu and Mughal weaving.<sup>57</sup> There are gold brocades, velvets, and embroideries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The majority of them are garments for men and women—saris, chadars, sashes, coats, and shawls, which give the visitor an idea of the fashions of India. To distinguish between Muhammadan and Hindu work is not always easy, as each influenced the other. Mughal weaving was under court control and like rugs showed in design and technique a mixture of both Persian and Hindu styles.

India adopted from Persia not only designs but many techniques, for instance the weaving of silk velvets. As in rug knotting, so in the weaving of velvets the Mughal craftsmen often surpassed their Persian masters. Fine Mughal velvets are very rare, and we are particularly pleased to be able to show a complete velvet hanging lent by George Blumenthal (fig. 31). The wine-red ground has a central medallion with symmetrically arranged stems bearing curling leaves and blossoms in white and blue-green. The naturalistic style of the floral design belongs to the

57. On Indian textiles see A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, pp. 137-140, and *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, pp. 193-209, 246-252.

period of Shah Jahan (1628-1658) and is similar to that used in contemporary rugs.

The weaving of silk brocades in India was highly developed by Muhammadan and Hindu weavers. Many centers of manufacture are known, among the most famous being Lahore, Aurangabad in Deccan, Chanderi in Gwalior, Benares, and Ahmadabad. All Indian brocades are characterized by sumptuous designs and color schemes and a lavish use of gold threads. A particularly fine specimen of Mughal silk brocading is the sash lent by Mrs. William H. Moore (fig. 30). The ends are decorated with several poppy plants in red and green on an almost solid gold ground bordered by several bands with scrolls bearing poppies. The technical perfection of this beautiful sash, which bears a Mughal stamp, is hardly surpassed by any known piece. It was probably woven at Lahore and to judge from the design may be assigned to the period of Shah Jahan. The sash, which was of Persian origin, was worn by all Mughal princes, as may be seen in miniatures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Among other Indian brocades in the exhibition should be mentioned two chadars lent by Miss Lucy T. Aldrich. One of them (fig. 32), of extraordinary richness of color and design, shows two pairs of peacocks on a ground of floral scrolls bordered by parrots in the brilliant, enamel-like colors characteristic of many of the eighteenth-century saris and chadars woven at Aurangabad, Ahmadabad, and other places.

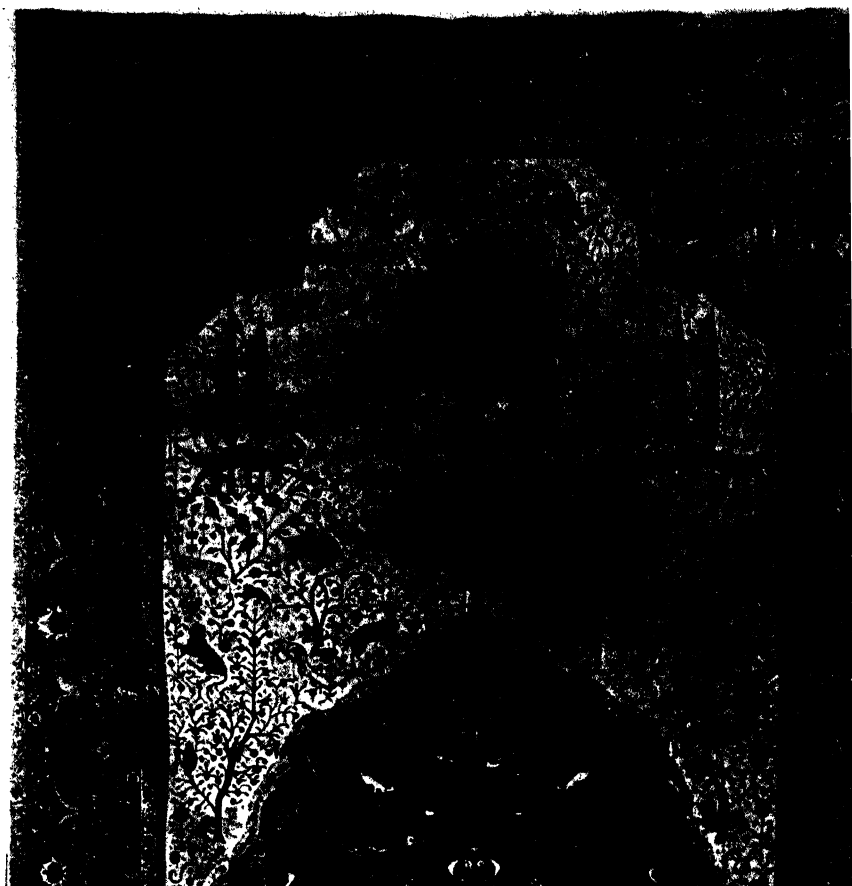
The Indian textiles best known in America are woven or embroidered Kashmir shawls. The fine eighteenth-century shawls, coats (*chogas*), and strips lent by Mrs. Moore and Miss Aldrich represent less-known types (cf. figs. 34, 35). Woven and embroidered pieces often look alike, and only an examination of the reverse discloses the technique. They are fashioned on small looms in long strips, later joined together. Characteristic of Kashmir textiles are patterns of cone-shaped motives derived from Persian art (cf. fig. 35) and patterns of naturalistic Indian flowers, as on the strip belonging to Mrs. Moore, which is partly woven and partly embroidered in a particularly fine technique (fig. 34).

Embroidery was highly developed in India and was applied to cotton turbans, coats (cf. fig. 29), sashes, and cushions. Of extraordinary quality is a seventeenth-century embroidered sash lent by Miss Aldrich (fig. 33). Here the ends are decorated with poppy plants worked in very fine chain

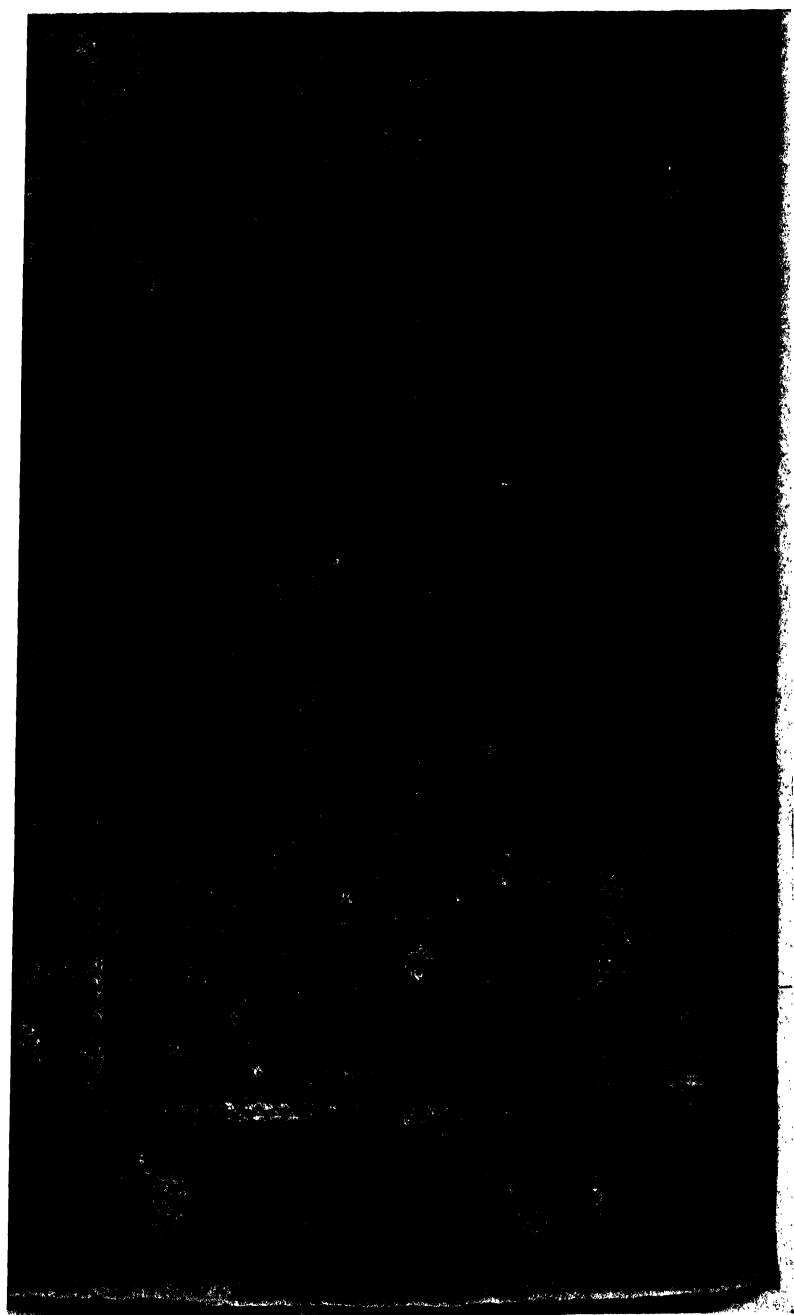
stitch in pink and light blue silk. Other embroideries characteristic of Rajputana are decorated with plant forms in satin stitch in silk, often with the addition of gold threads.

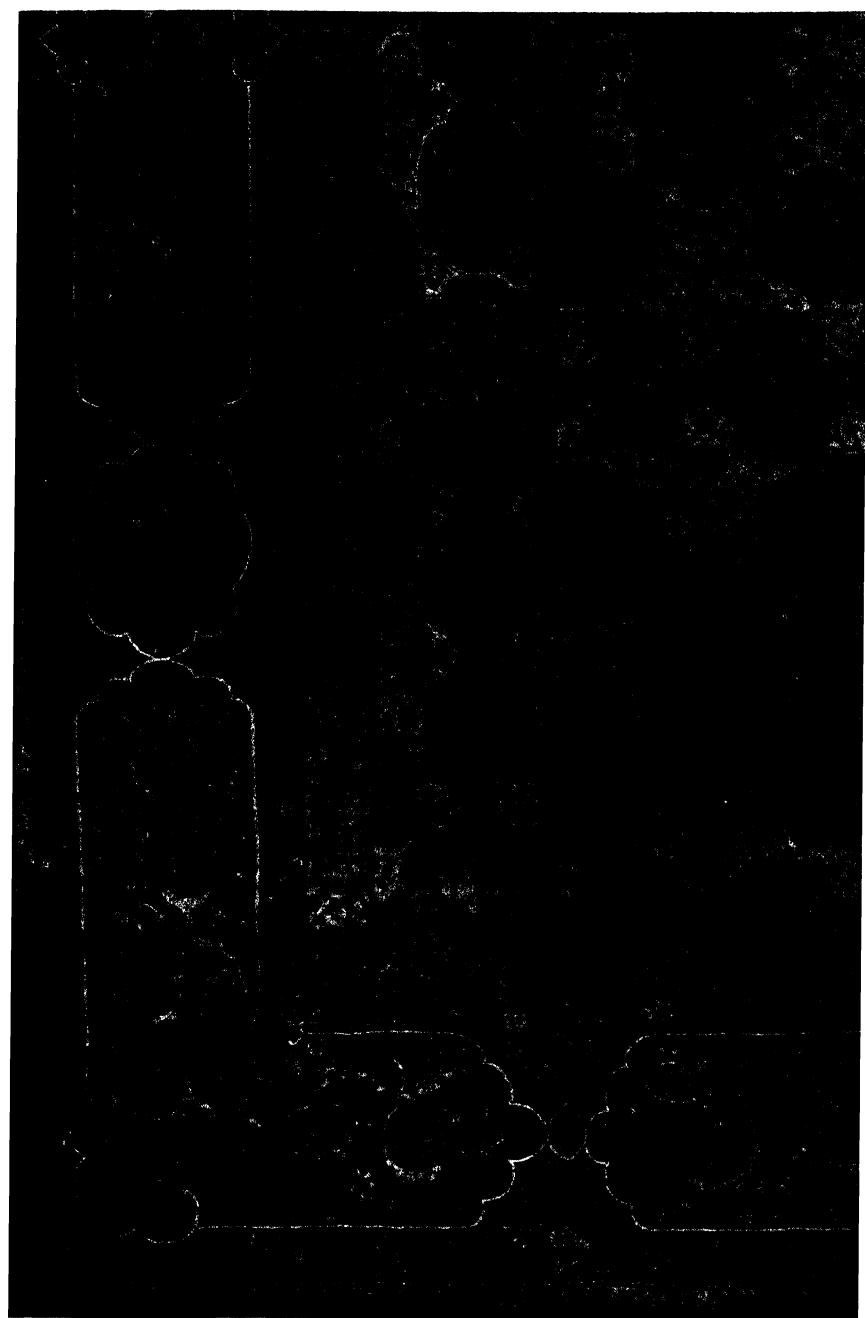
## ILLUSTRATIONS

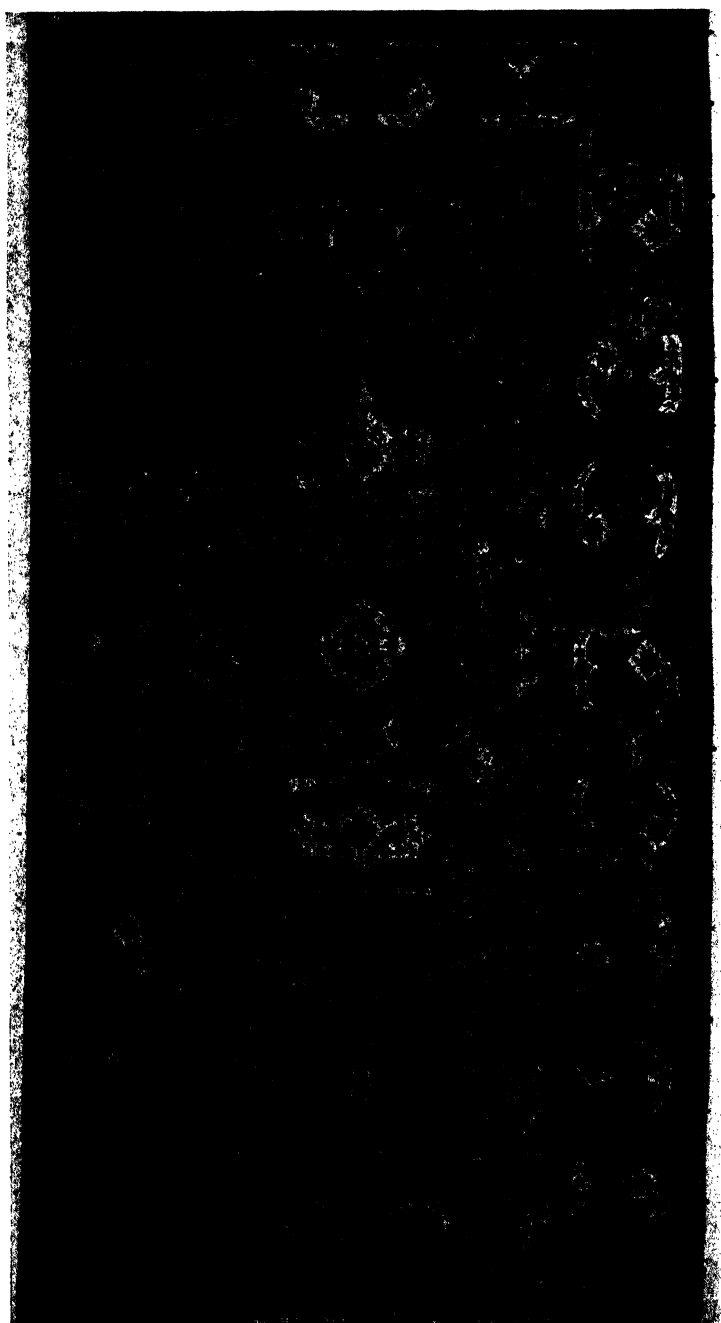


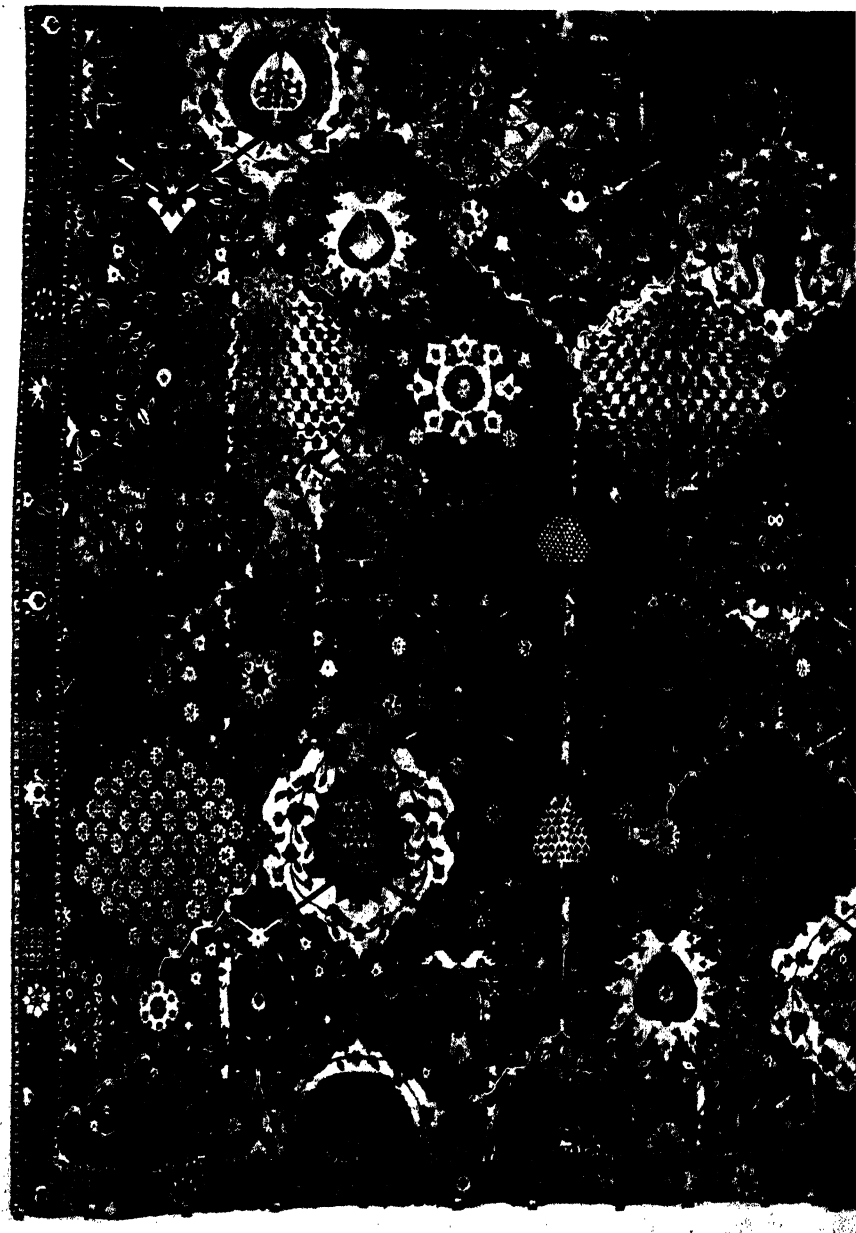


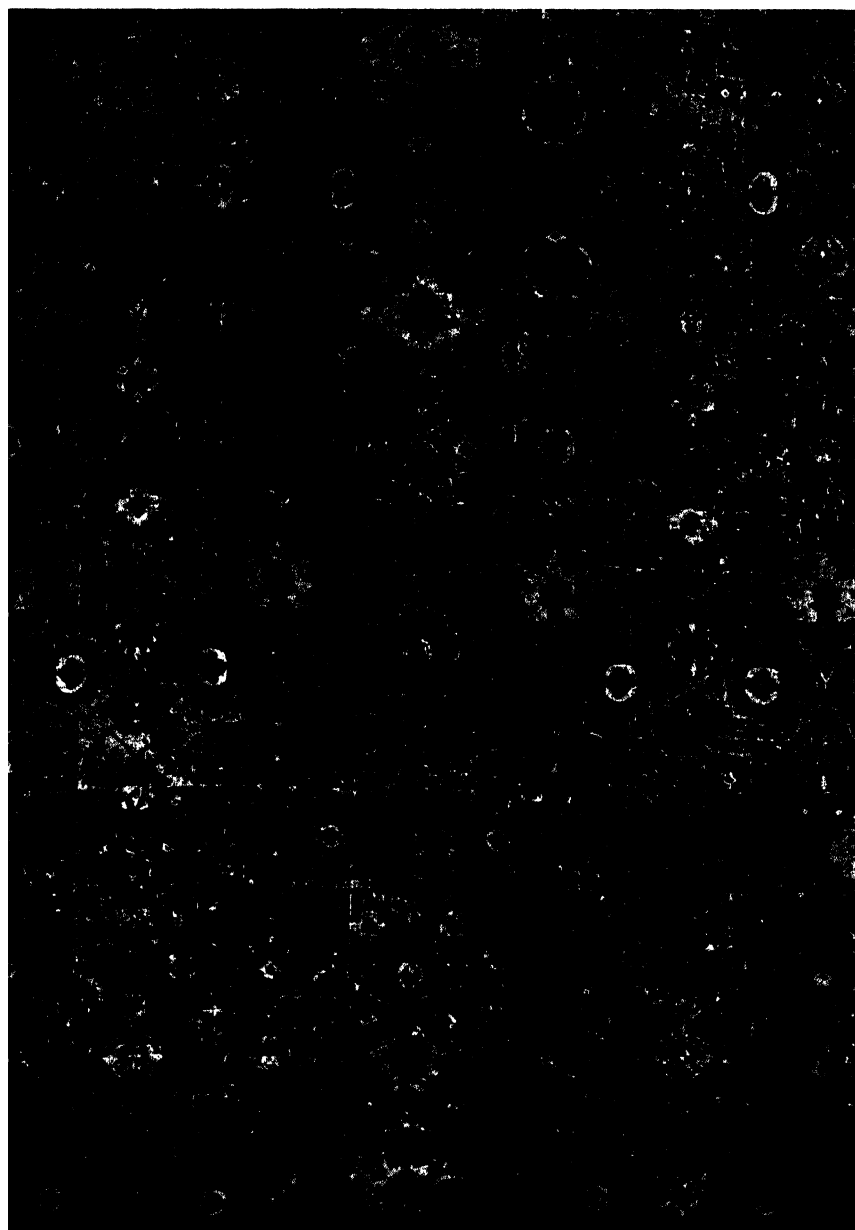


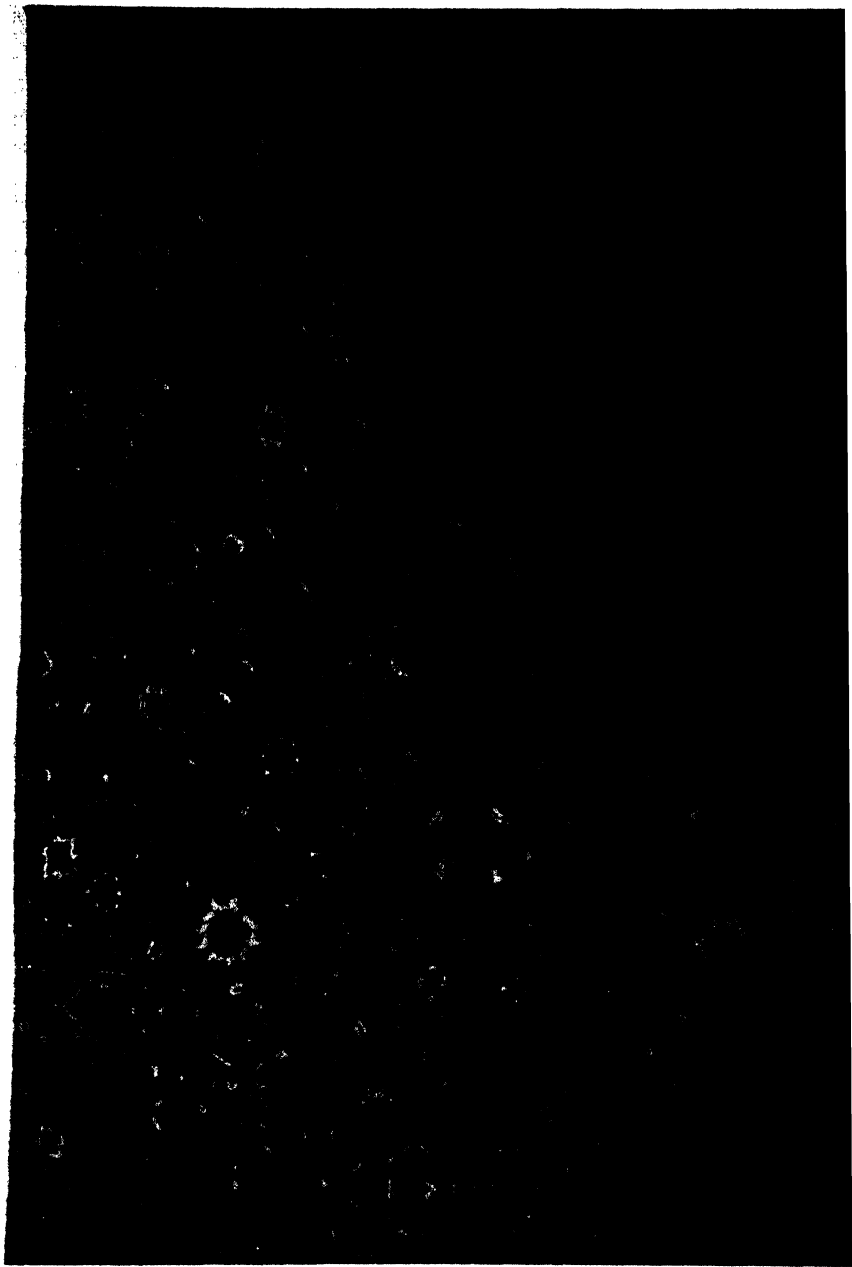


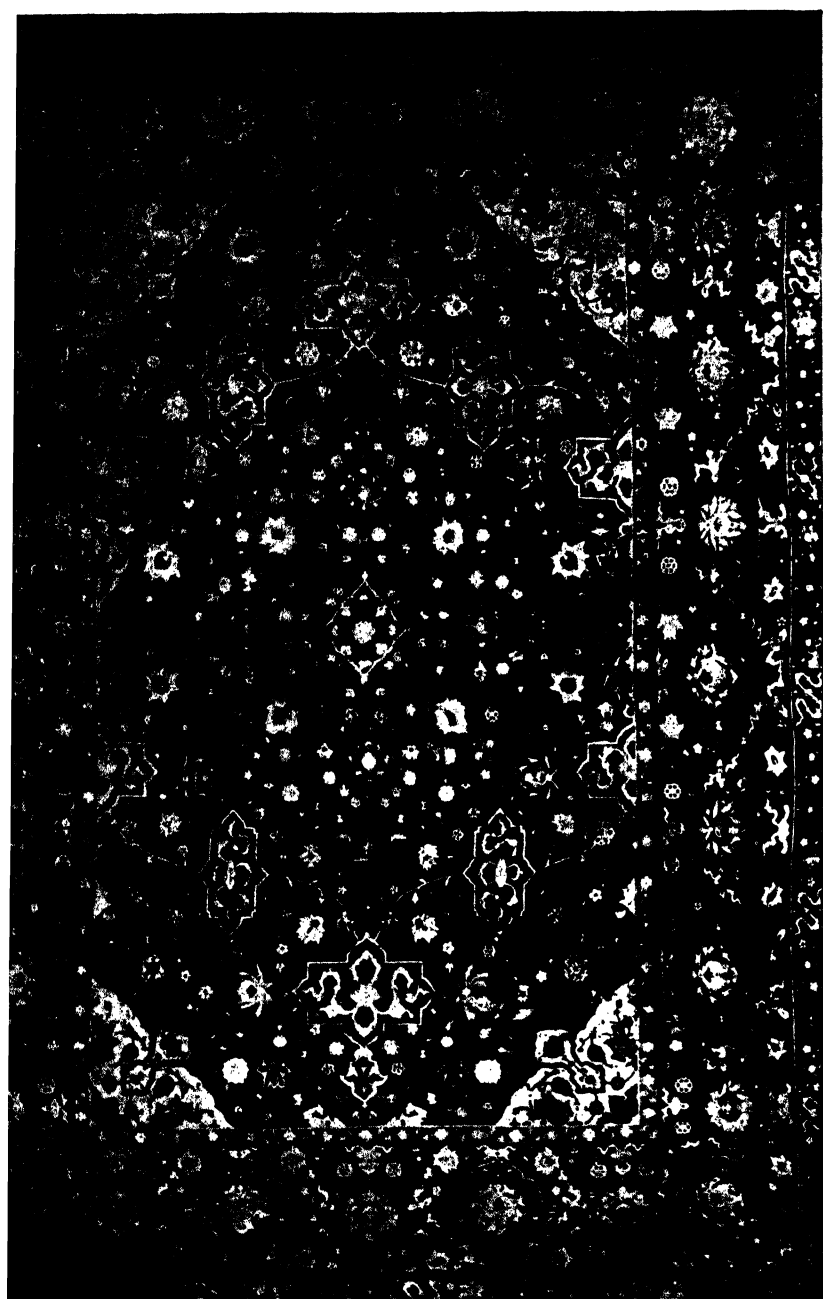


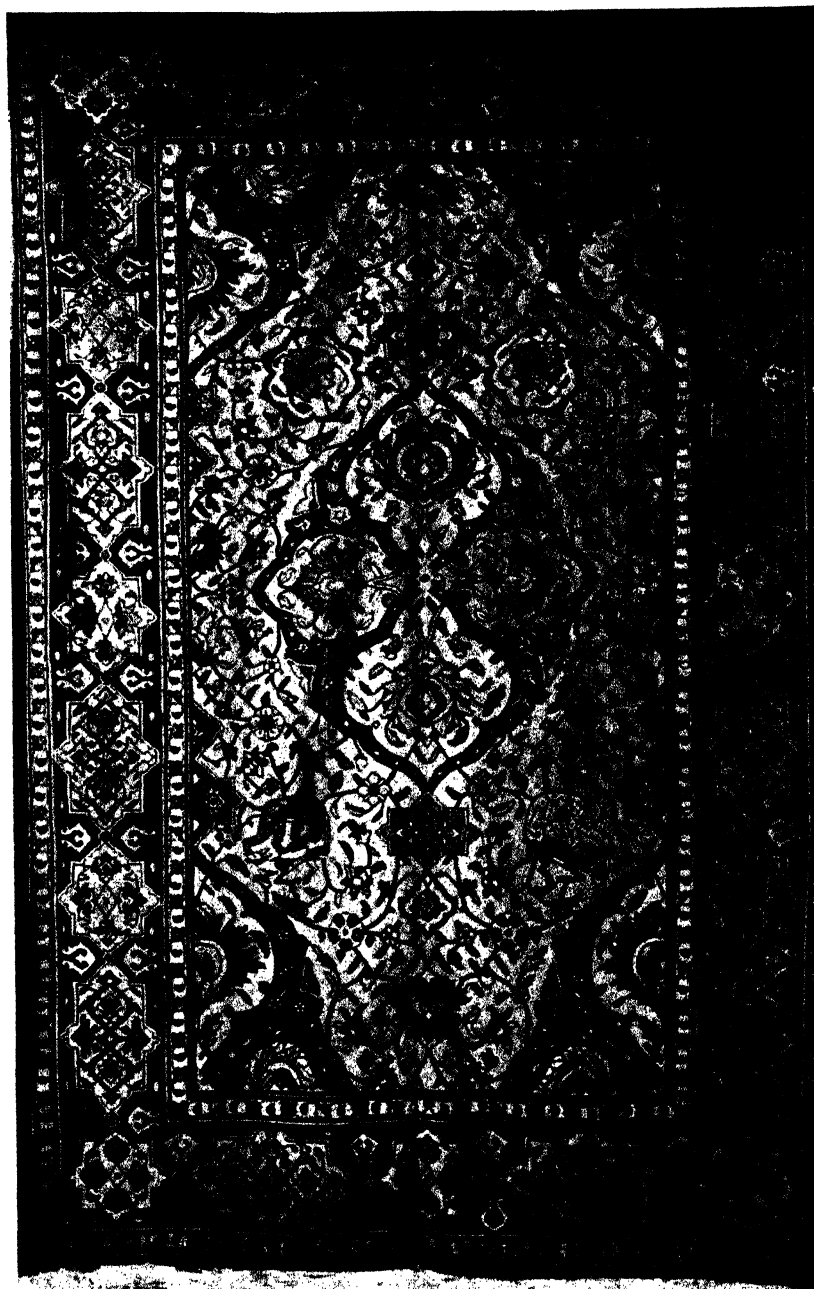




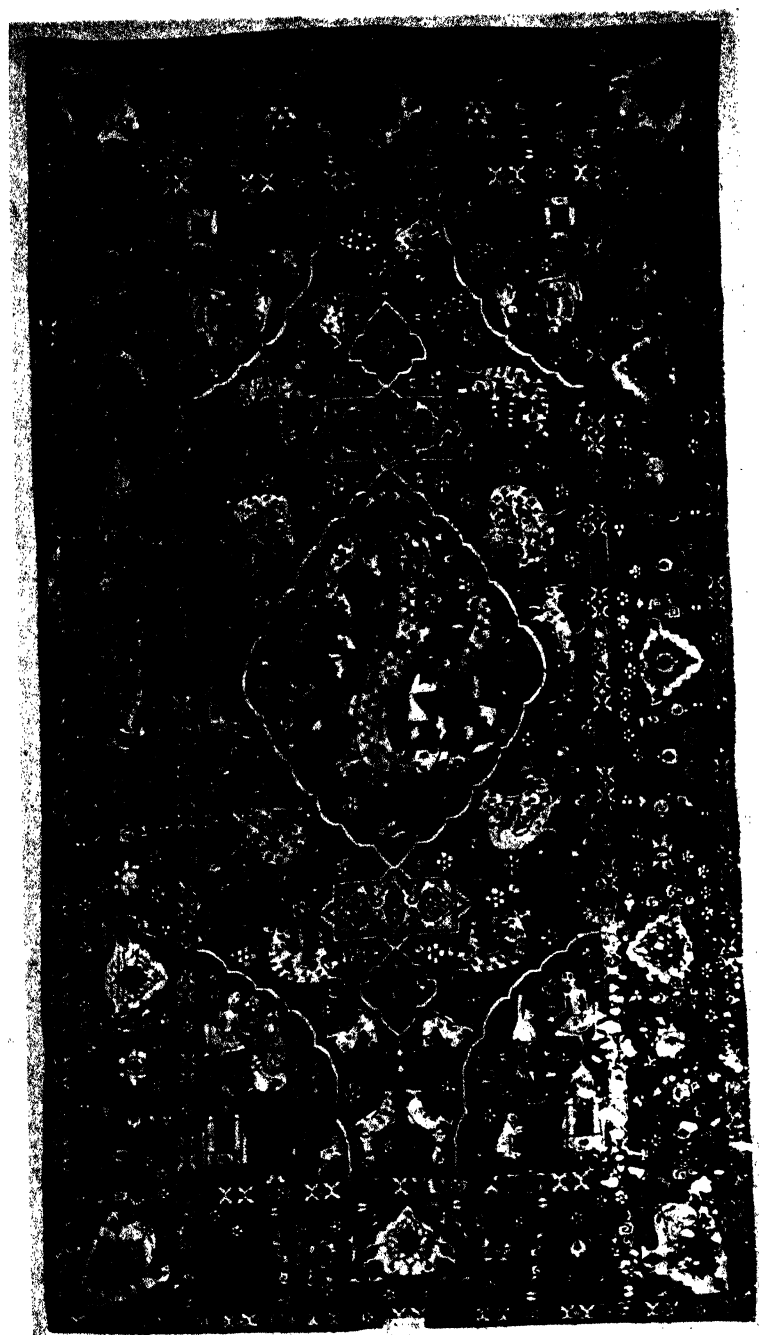


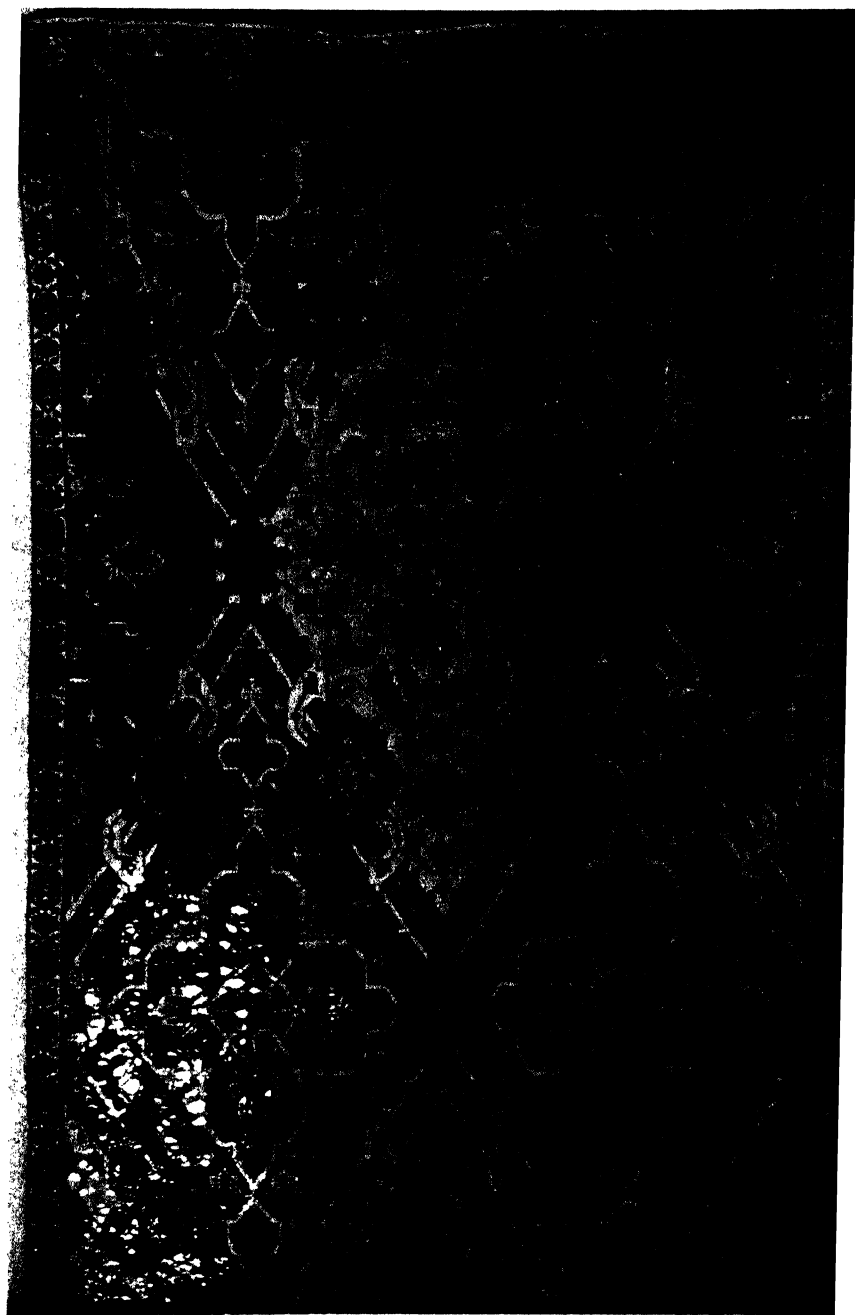


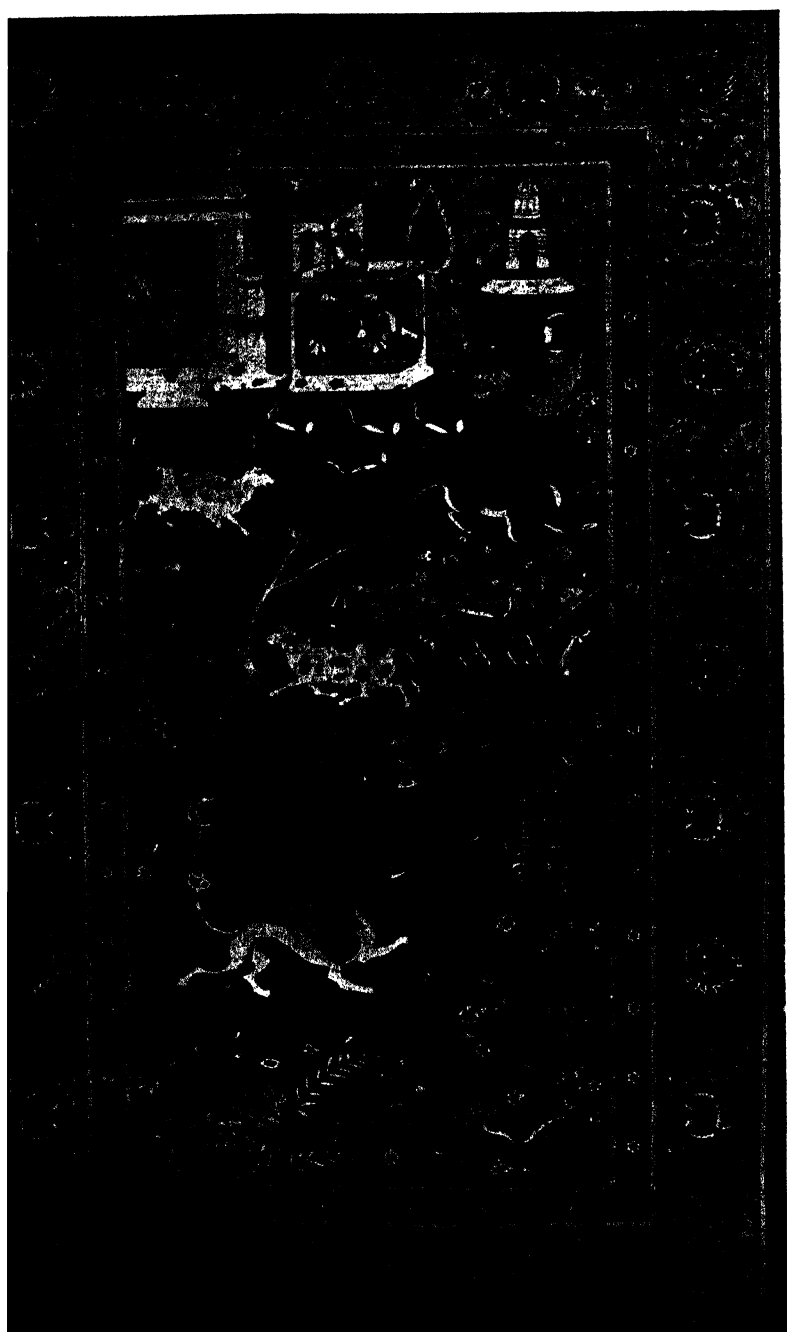


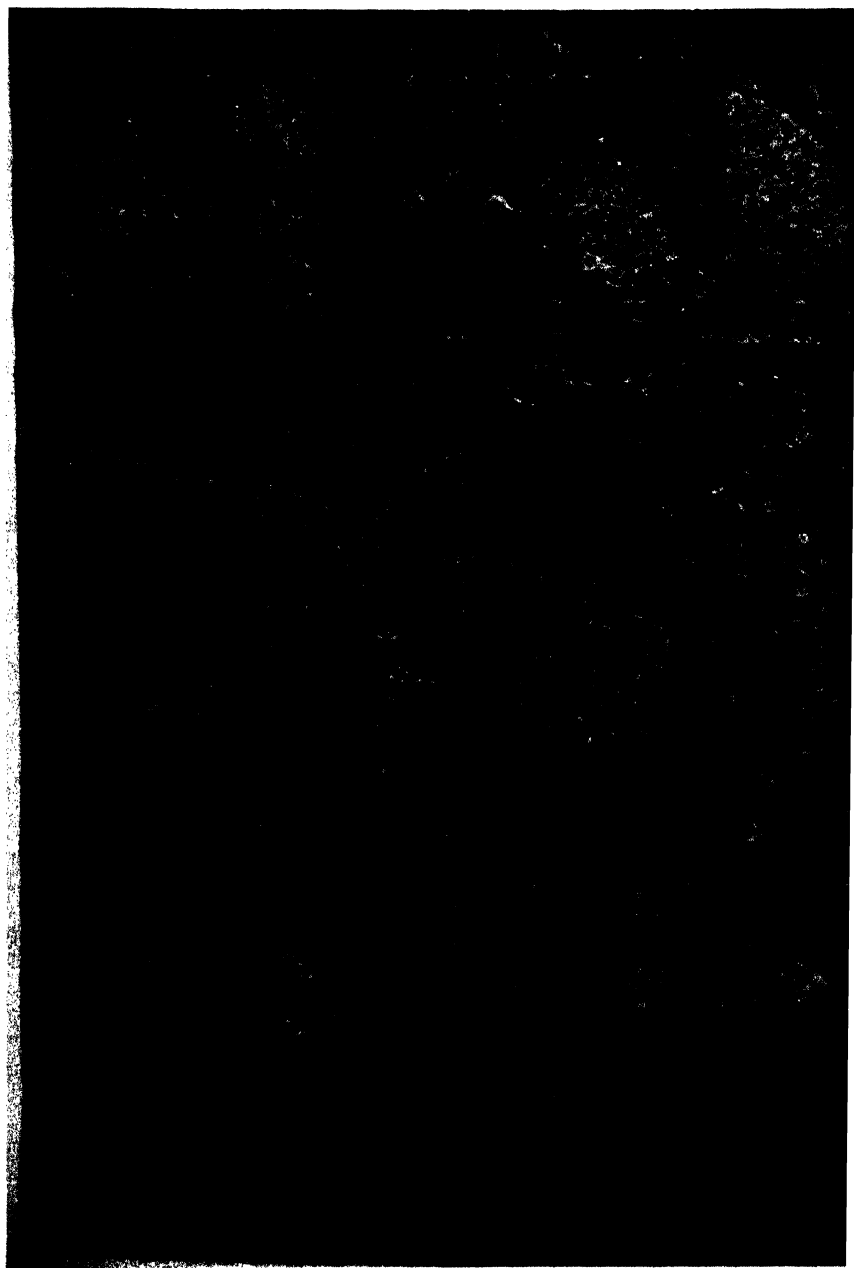


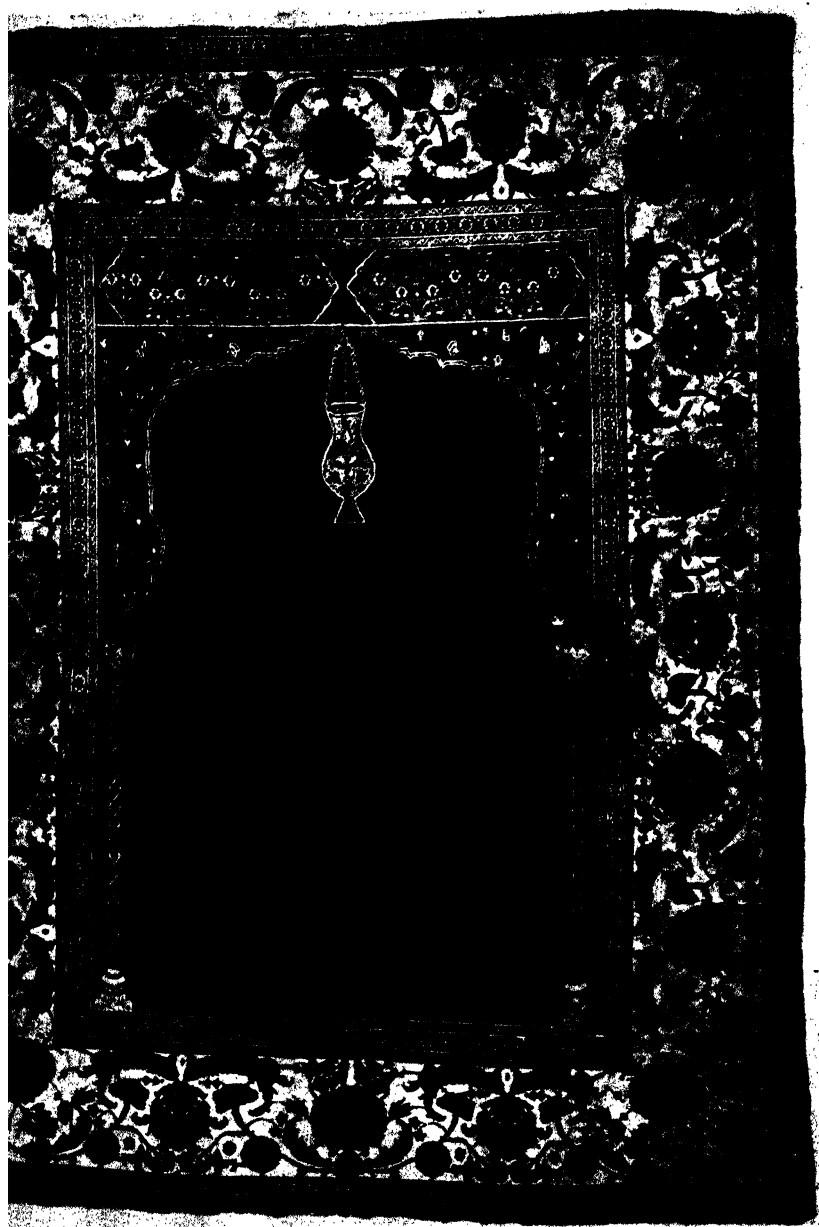


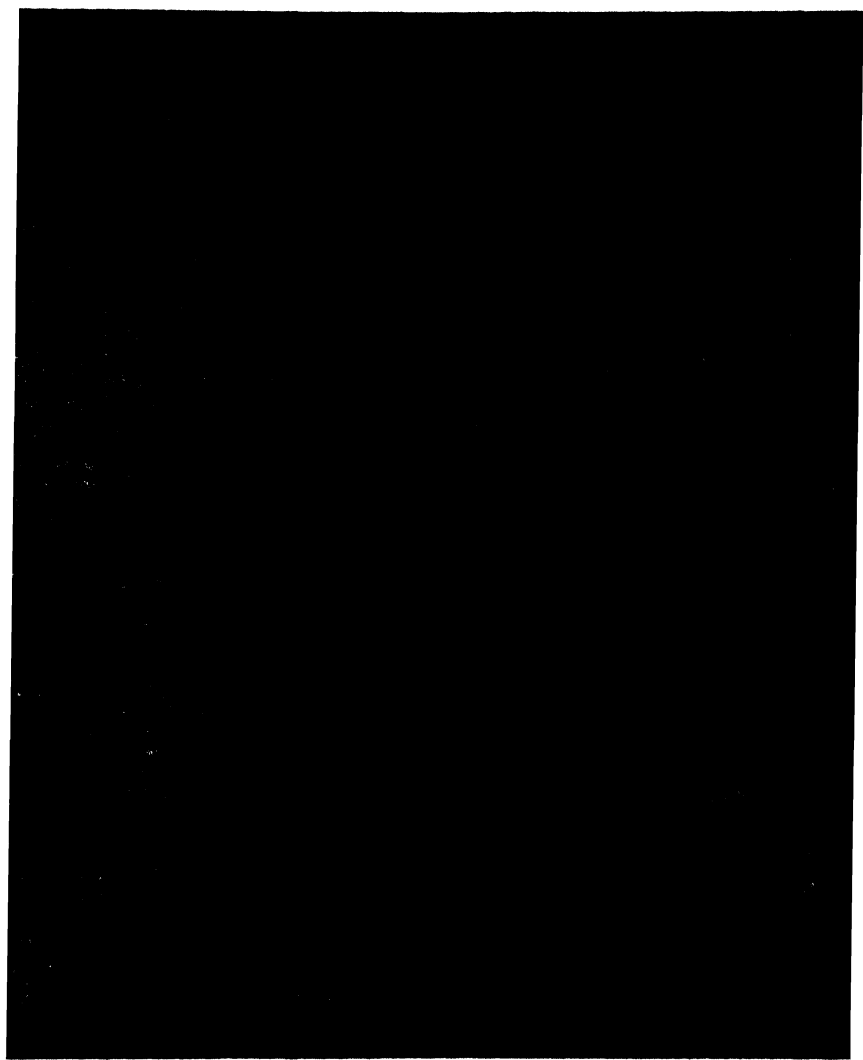


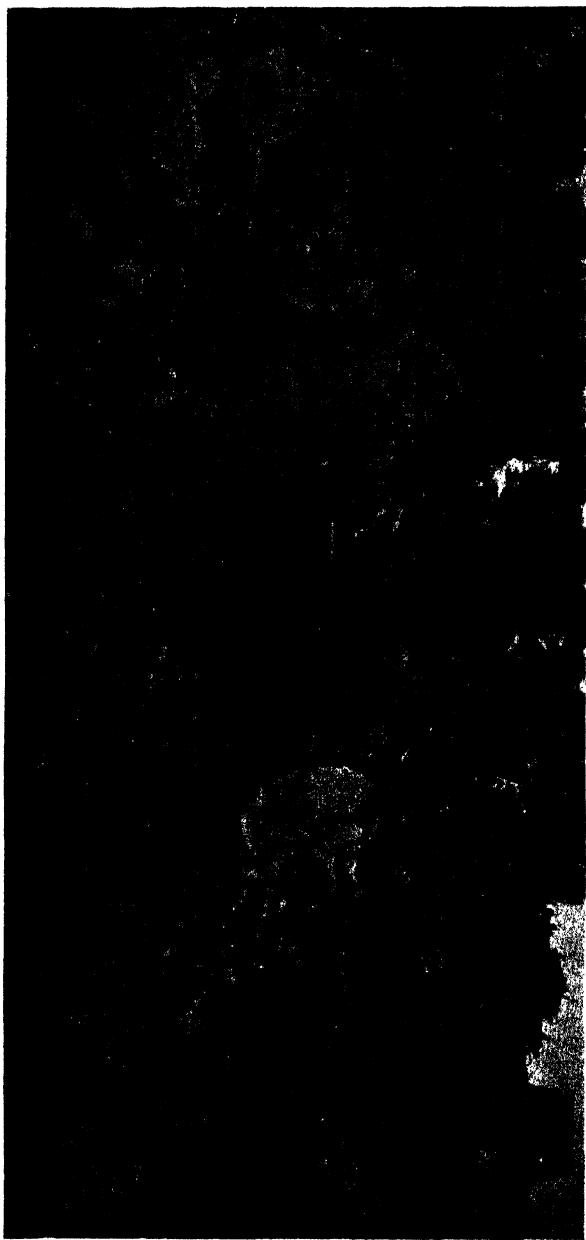


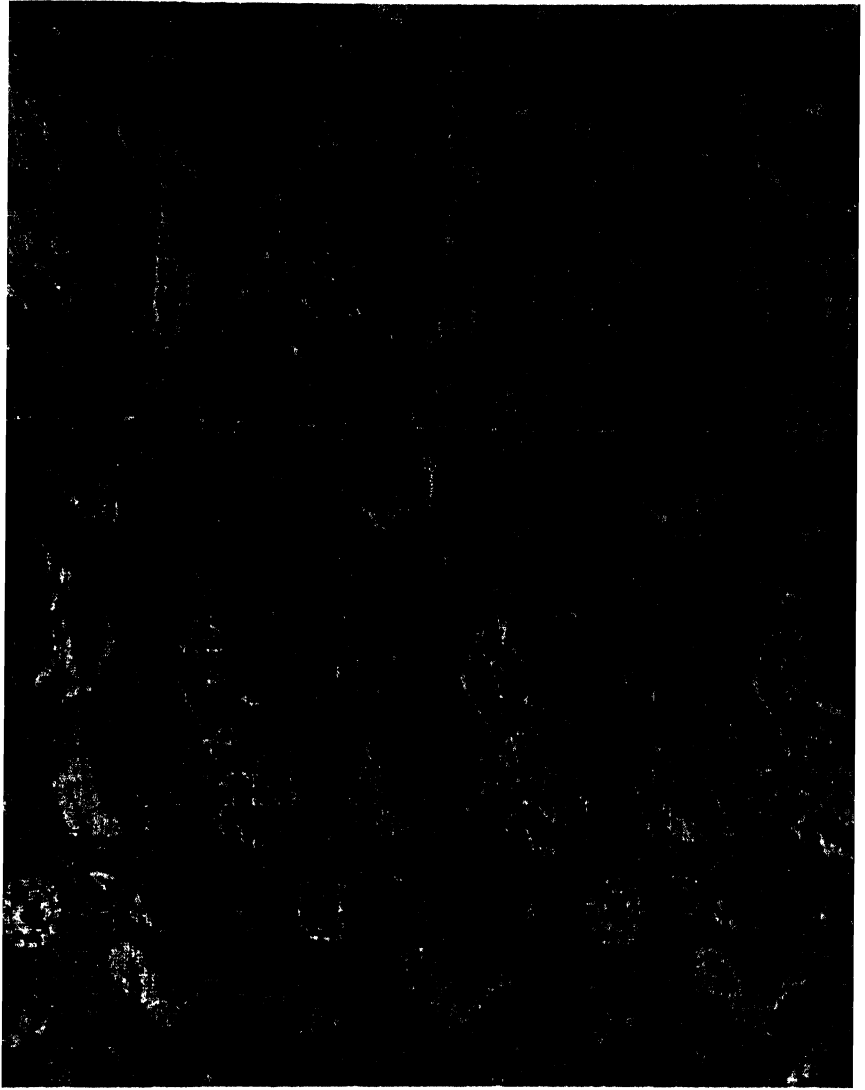




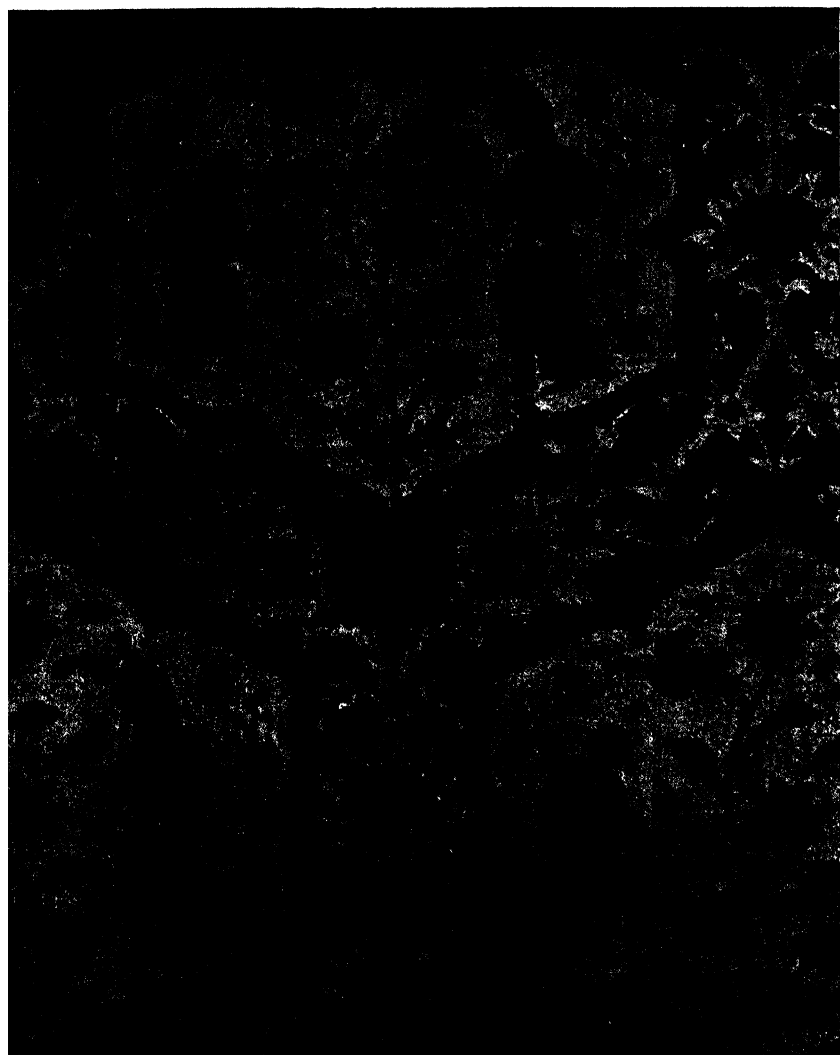




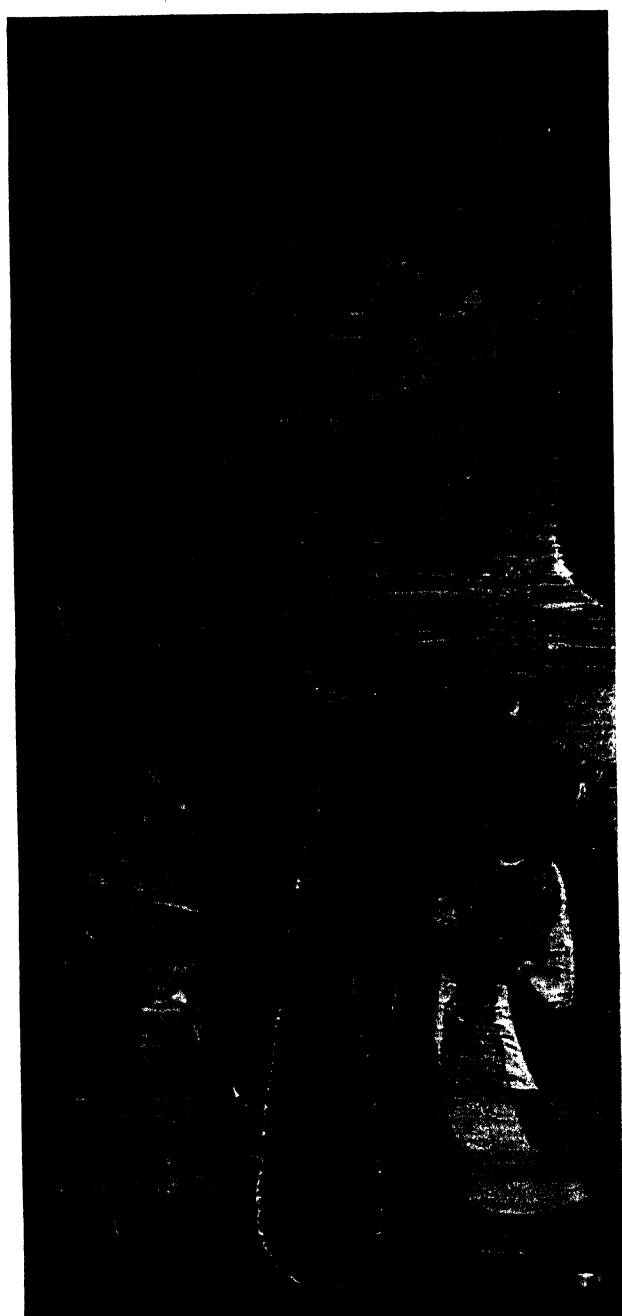




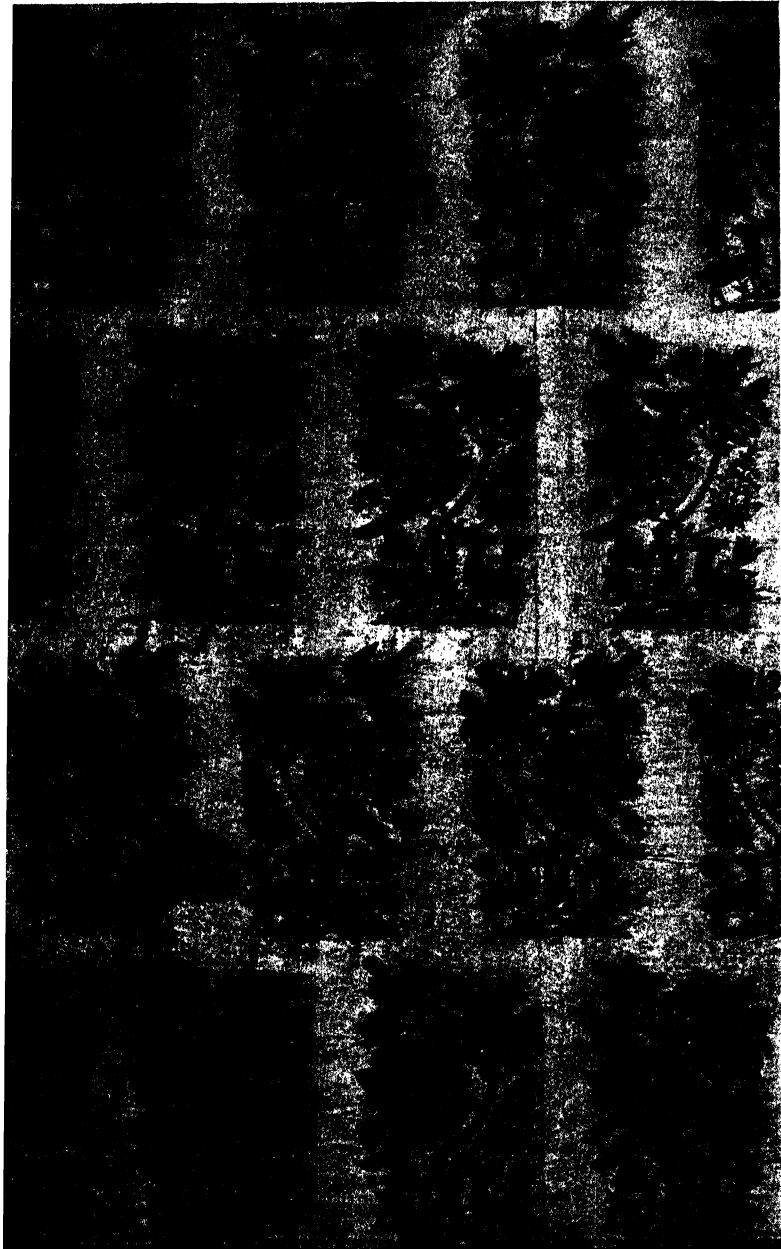


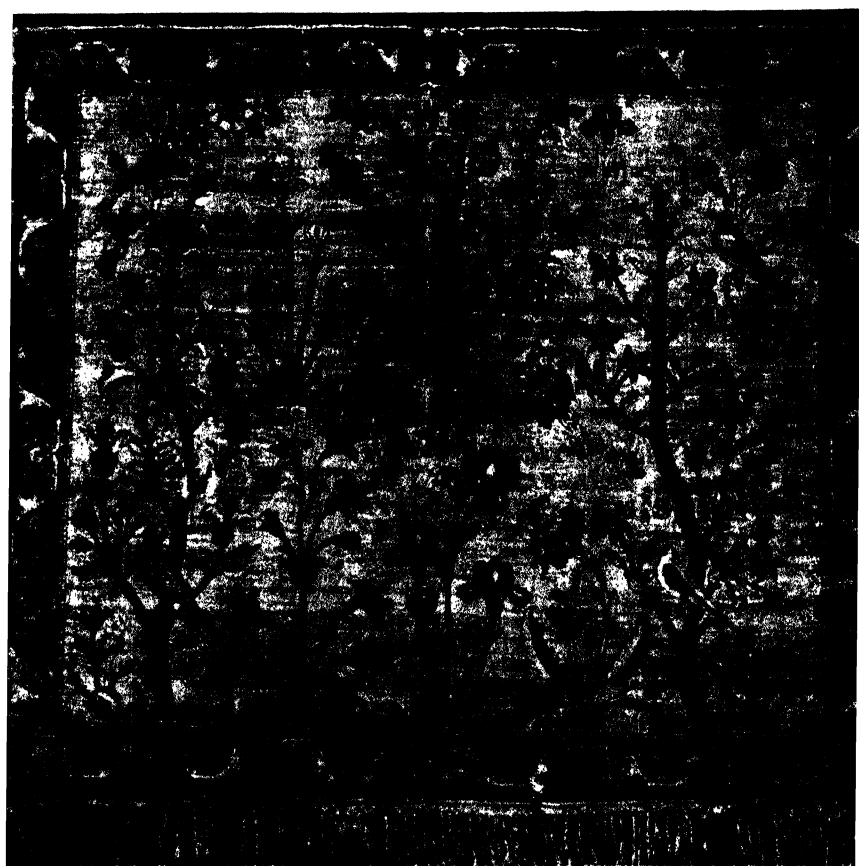




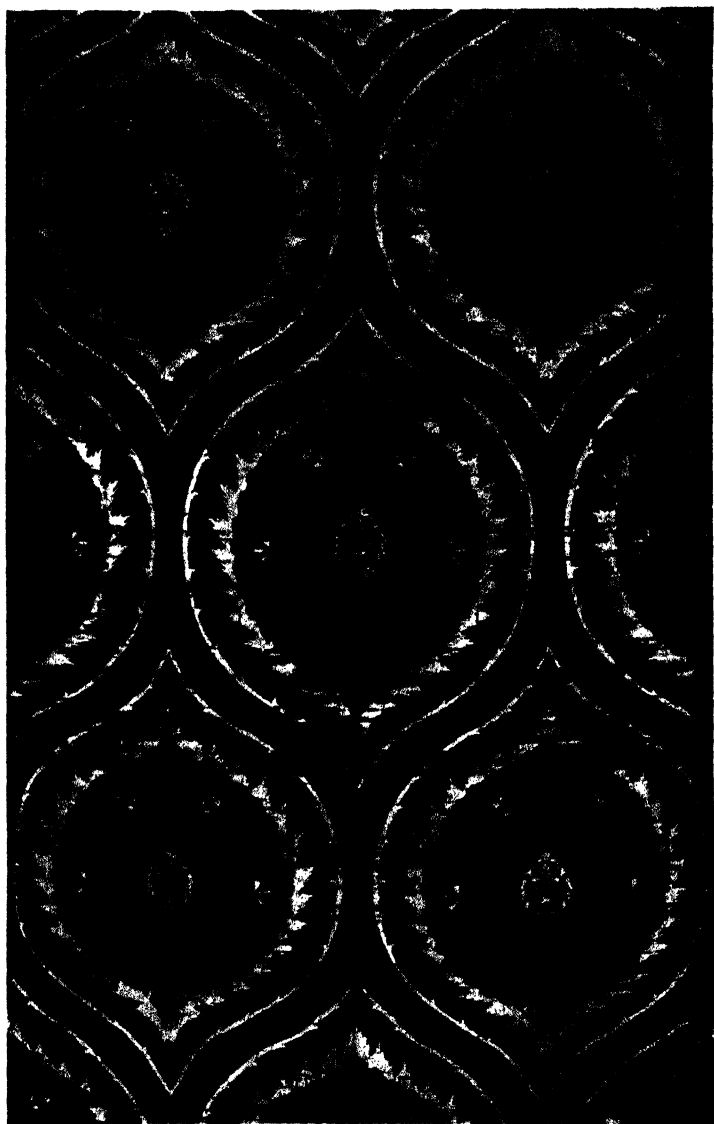




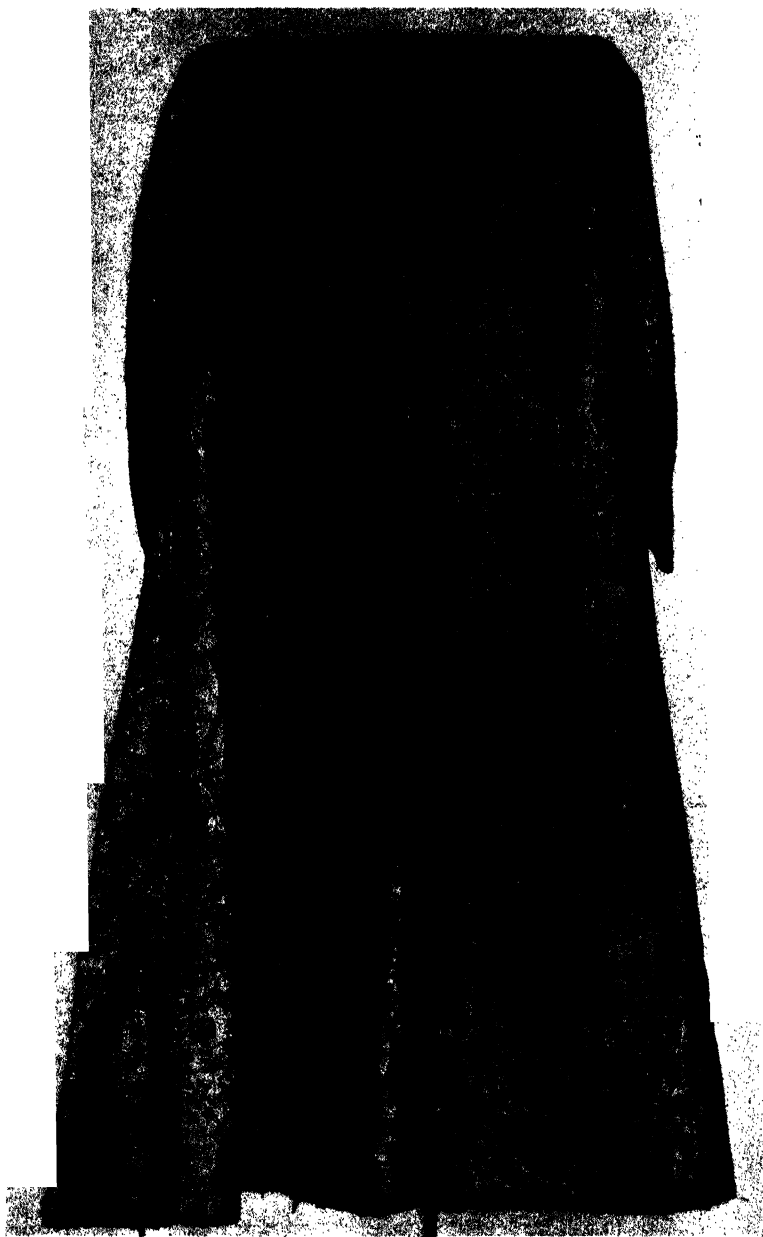




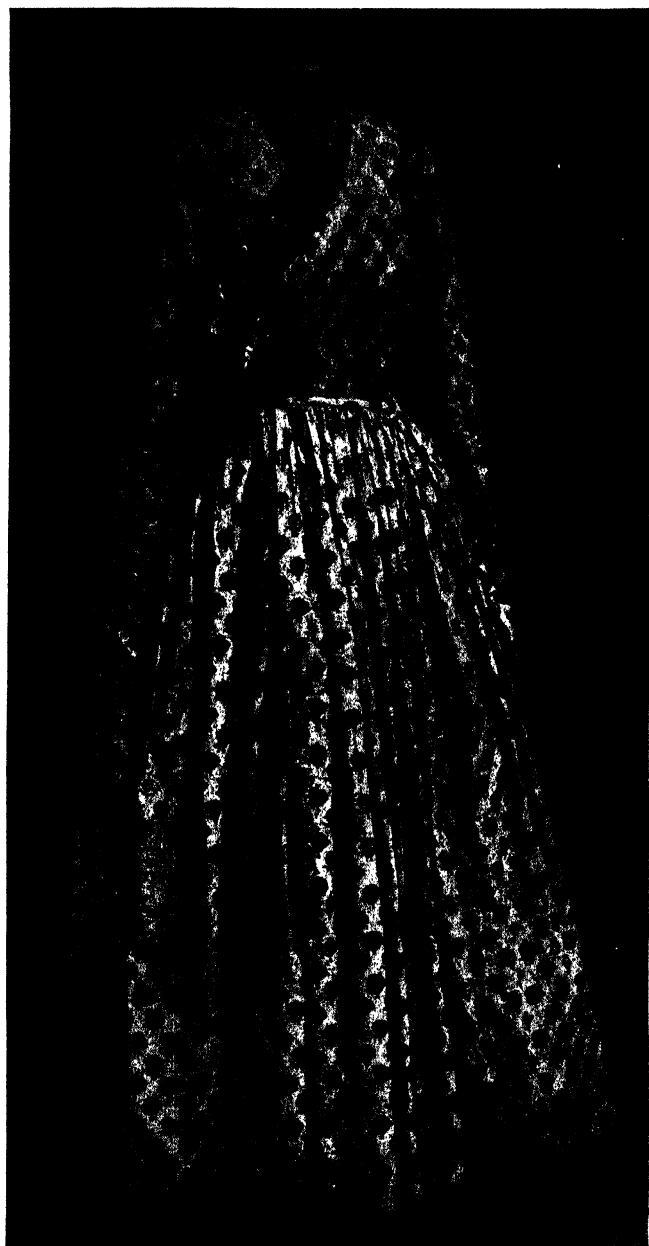




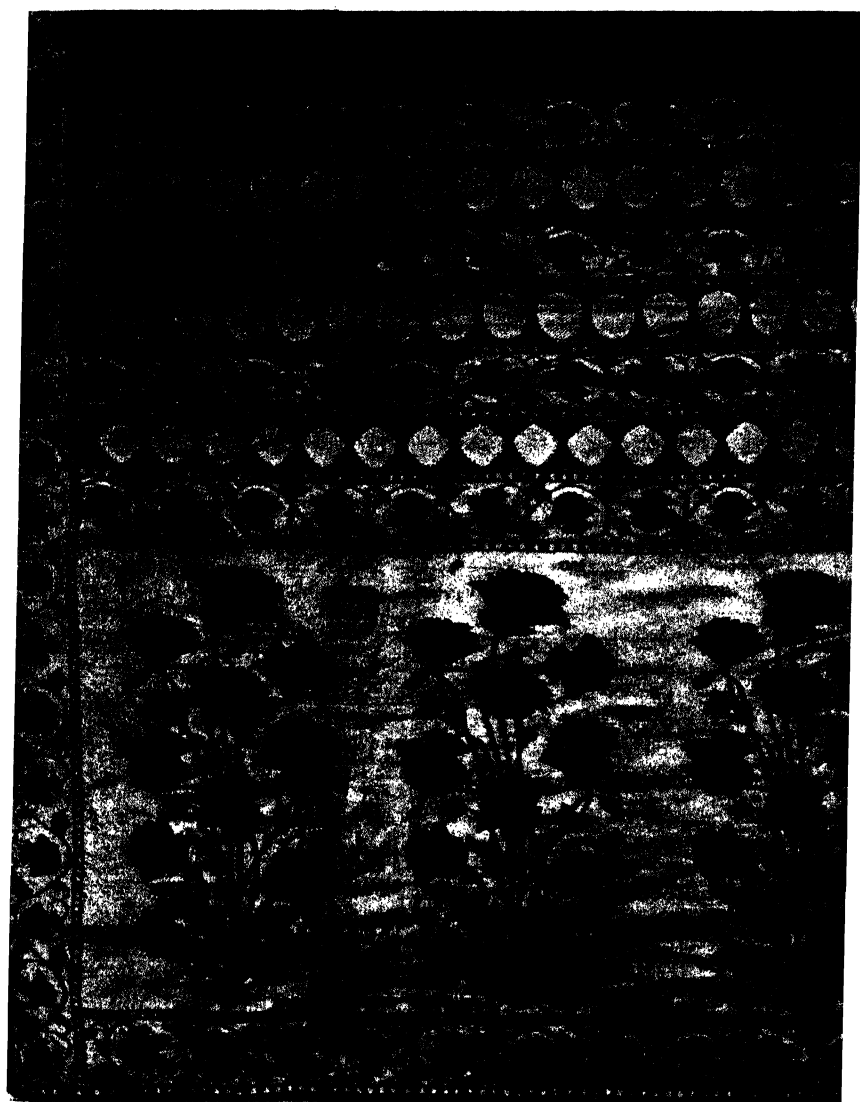


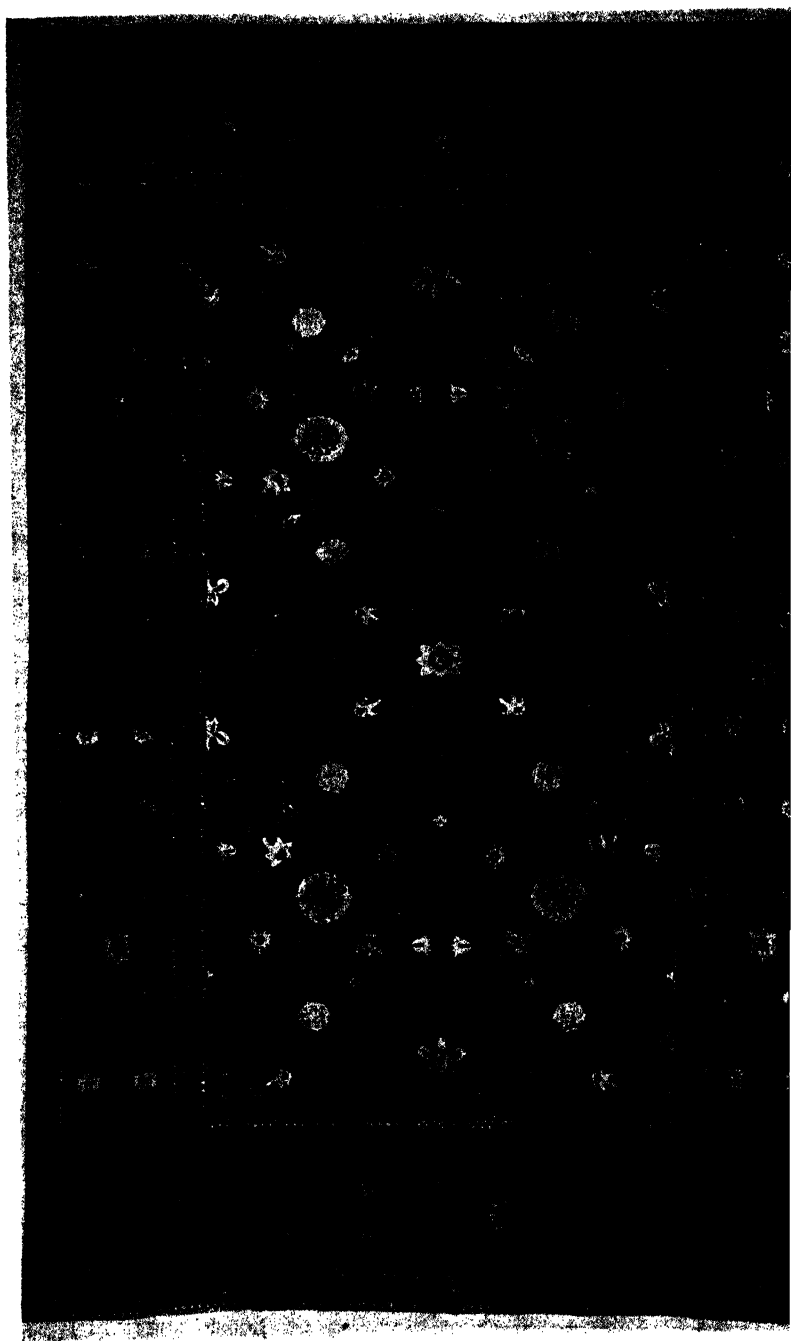








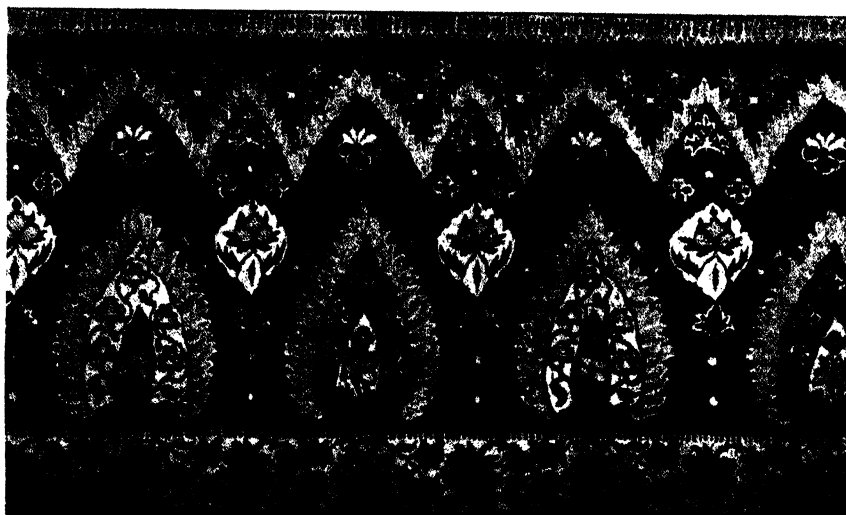




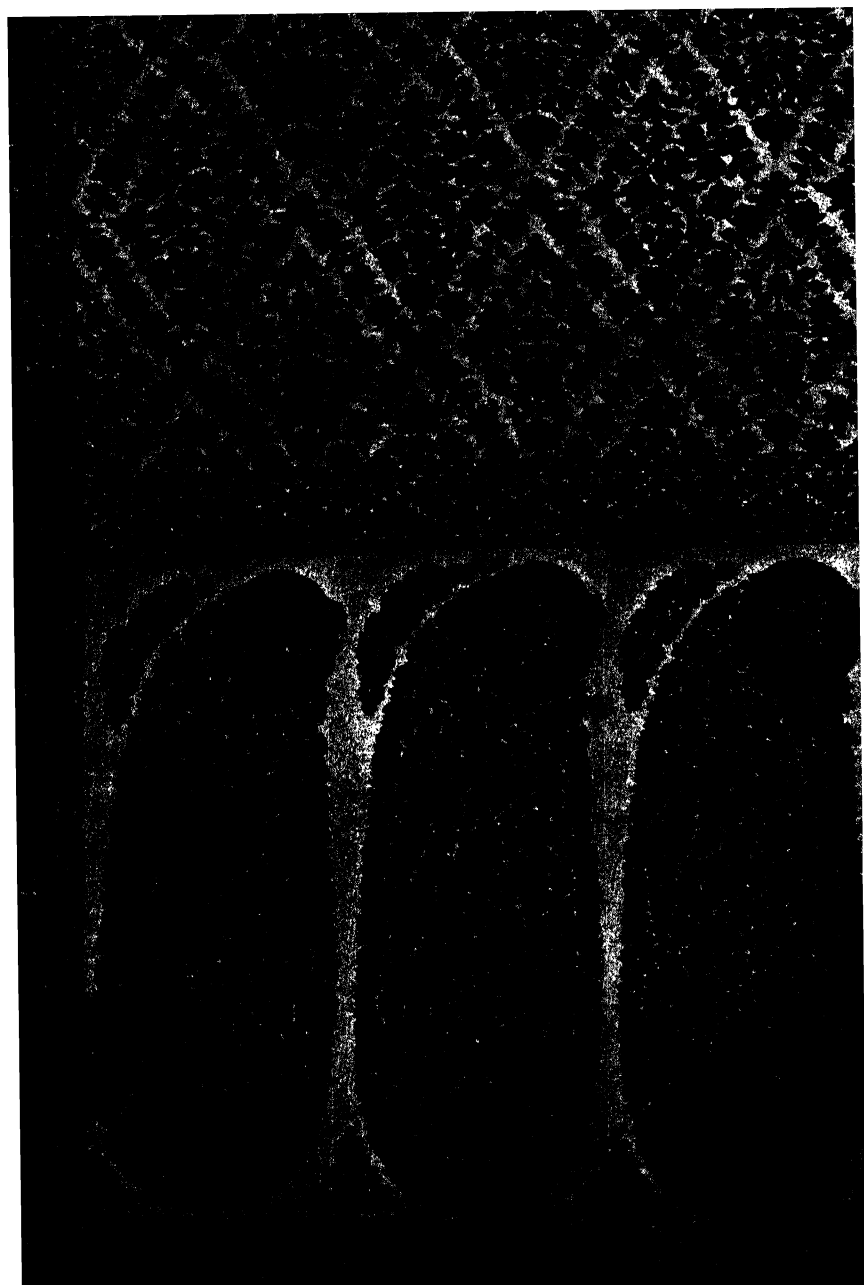




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BY E. L. HILDRETH & CO., INC.

MAY, 1935







